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How Can A Modified Teacher Child Interaction Training (TCIT) Program Decrease Problem Behaviors In Pre-K To First-Grade Classrooms By Supporting Positive Student-Teacher Interactions?

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How can a Modified Teacher Child Interaction Training (TCIT) Program Decrease Problem Behaviors in Pre-K to First-Grade Classrooms by Supporting Positive Student-Teacher Interactions?

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Education.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Capstone Question

This Capstone will describe a behavior modification program inspired by Teacher Child Interaction Training (TCIT) to help reduce behavior problems in the classroom and help support positive student-teacher interactions. Chapter One will describe the process of why I choose to answer the question: How can a modified Teacher Child Interaction Training (TCIT) program decrease problem behaviors in Pre-K to first-grade classrooms by supporting positive student-teacher interactions? I will describe my background in education and passion towards building strong relationships with students. In Chapter Two, I will introduce Parent Child Interaction Training (PCIT), the therapeutic therapy model that inspired TCIT, and the research behind the specific skill set used in PCIT and TCIT. In Chapter Three I will provide justification for designing professional development for Pre-K to first grade teachers in order to strengthen the student-teacher relationships. My program “TCIT-lite” will be introduced and the presentation framework will be outlined. In the final chapter I will reflect on Capstone experience while also highlight limitations and implications of this project.
Ten years ago I took an extended leave of absence from teaching. At the time I teaching children three to five years old with developmental delays who required Special Education services. My classroom housed inclusionary and self-contained preschool classes to these children to help them gain the skills necessary to be successful in Kindergarten. During my leave, I started a successful home daycare business and a Masters in teaching program to become licensed as an elementary teacher. After four years of working inside my home and halfway through my Master’s program, I cautiously re-entered the world of education and teaching. I closed my home daycare business, put my three children in someone else’s hands, took a depth breath, and jumped in.

Teaching full-time and going to graduate school meant sacrificing time with my family, time to take care of myself, and time to do my job as well as I wanted to. It also meant that I learned how to multi-task, prioritize, expertly plan and manage my time, and how to learn from failure. Over the last six years, the valuable lessons I have learned made this all worthwhile. I realized that I can show love to my children, love my husband, love myself, and love my job in the midst of organized chaos.

I accepted a position as an Early Childhood Special Education Birth to Two Teacher in the district I was previously employed. This is still under the Special
Education umbrella, but service delivery is different. I taught in the home using weekly home visits to model and teach children; under the age of three, with developmental delays using their daily routines as my framework. I wanted to use and share my experience as a parent to form a positive relationship with parents.

I was nervous how my teaching would change now that I had children of my own. As I observed my own children’s preschool and kindergarten teachers, I realized that relationships were key to educating children. My kids loved their teachers and had a strong positive relationship with each of them. They loved going to school and were confident and comfortable. I always knew the student-teacher relationship was important, but I underestimated the impact it had. I vowed to put significant energy into building positive authentic relationships with my own students.

There were some advantages to being back in the same district and it felt as if I never left. The referral efforts of the Early Childhood Special Education department paid off and the program had almost tripled in enrollment in the time I was gone. There were some staffing changes and many new teachers were brought on board. One of the larger staff changes was a new Special Education Director who I met at Back to School Workshop. His introduction was a picture from the movie Despicable Me. This is a children’s film about a professional thief that wants to steal the moon. This new director was passionate about having us “steal the moon” and capitalize on our expertise to help
children with learning disabilities and other disorders learn with their peers in a differentiated classroom. He wanted teachers to be there for a population that is typically misrepresented in the classroom setting. He had a strong background in child and family therapy and was a psychologist before entering the field of education. He used a therapy lens that many professionals in education lack. He wanted to use relationships and communication strategies as a way to regulate and instruct young children.

My TCIT Experience

I didn’t learn about this new director’s passion for Teacher Child Interaction Training (TCIT) until four months after that first Back to School workshop. There was a buzz about intense training that teachers, social workers, and special education administration were receiving. I inquired about the program and was grateful that my supervisor encouraged me to sign up for a session. I wasn’t teaching in the classroom, but I didn’t want to miss out on something that appeared so innovative.

TCIT is a program adapted from a therapeutic model used in family therapy called Parent Child Interaction Training (PCIT). In PCIT, parents are coached on how to use specific communication techniques to decrease negative behavior with their children and establish a stable, nurturing relationship (Hembree-Kigin & McNeil, 2011). The program is intense. It requires hourly sessions with a therapist (coach) who works with the parent and child in a play based environment. The therapist is in a separate room with a one
way mirror and coaches the parent on what to say to the child through an earpiece. The therapist looks for the specific communication strategies of reflection, labeled praise, and behavior descriptions and is also uses positive reinforcement with the parents. Educators following the program reported impressive result for improving behavior in young children. A detailed background of PCIT and how it led to the creation of TCIT will be in the literature review in Chapter Two.

In TCIT, trained coaches teaching similar communication skills as PCIT to teachers to elicit positive behaviors and create a classroom environment that is non-threatening, nurturing, and promotes self-regulation of students. The teachers attend up to ten hours of training where they learn specific skills in communicating with young children. They practice these skills by role-playing with a coach. The coach will mentor and observe the teacher in the classroom by providing immediate feedback through an earpiece while teacher is teaching. The coach will record data to ensure the teacher is using Teacher Directed Interactions (TDI) skills and Child Directed Interaction (CDI) skills. It is important that there is an equal number of occurrences for each communication skills in order for it to be effective because it balances the control between teacher and student. Teachers will receive coaching weekly in the beginning and then periodically thereafter to ensure that the skills are still being used.
The director rolled out TCIT for Pre-K to first-grade teachers, social workers, and school psychologists that were interested in learning about TCIT in multiple tiers and layers. As much as he would have liked the program to be required in each and every Pre-K through first-grade classroom, the teacher needs to have buy-in to the program. They have to want change and commit.

When I attended my first training, I thought “This is so simple and straightforward,” but it is difficult to use CDI and TDI skills together and to balance the feedback I was giving to my students. It is a complicated behavior change program. For example, when using TCIT, questions are limited because they can deregulate young children. Teachers are coached to avoid questions and give ways to rephrase questions as statements to elicit a response. It is habit to ask questions to young children to learn more about them and build relationships. Newcomers to the skills of reflection, behavior descriptions, and labeled praise find it nearly impossible to do this. It is not how teachers typically communicate with students. For example, if a student is playing with toy car, a typical response would be “Do you have the car?” or “What color is your car?” or “Where is your car going?” These are all questions that can be deregulating to a child. A TCIT response, on the other hand, would be “You have a car,” “Your car is blue,” “Thank you for showing me your car,” or “You picked up the car to show me.” These are statements describing what on has observed. I found it challenging myself to train myself
to use these skills without constantly having to think about the words coming out of my mouth.

After my first training session on TCIT, I felt the passion I was craving and knew I wanted to be a part of our district initiative. It made sense to me. I knew this is how our youngest students needed to be taught. I continued with training and then became a district coach with the Early Childhood Special Education staff. After using this program for two years, I wanted to know how it was working in our classrooms. I accepted a position as a kindergarten teacher and was excited to expand my coaching role. That year, the TCIT initiative was put on hold because of budget cuts.

The Future of TCIT

Many trained teachers are still using TCIT strategies, but they were not getting the coaching and support to keep the program alive in their classrooms. I was one of them. Without the continued coaching support, I found myself slipping out of the TCIT method and letting instructional goals get in the way of taking time to build relationships. I was feeling frustrated that the strategies were still not part of my natural repertoire. When I spent time focusing on the strategies I would feel overwhelmed trying to make sure I was balancing my Child Directed Interactions (CDI) and my Teacher Directed Interactions (TDI). This lead to my capstone project of designing an adapted version of TCIT, called TCIT-lite, that can be used by Pre-K to first-grade classroom teachers to help build
positive relationships with their students and decrease problematic behavior. TCIT-lite invigorates teachers to try something new and create a new framework to help their students feel safe, regulated, and comfortable in the classrooms.

Summary

Throughout this chapter I described the background of TCIT and my passion for using this approach with Pre-K to first grade teachers and students. I feel the TCIT method increases positive relationships with students while decreasing problematic behavior. In the next chapter I will introduce into the methods used in PCIT and TCIT and the research surrounding the practice through a review of literature. The skills of labeled praise, reflections, imitation, behavior descriptions, and enthusiasm, or PRIDE skills, will be described and shown how they can support student-teacher relationships. The training process for TCIT will conclude the chapter.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review seeks to explore the background of Teacher Child Interaction Training (TCIT) and how the skills used promote positive teacher-child relationships and increase compliance in the classroom while decreasing disruptive classroom behavior. The question to be answered is: How can a modified Teacher Child Interaction Training (TCIT) program decrease problem behaviors in Pre-K to first-grade classrooms by supporting positive student-teacher interactions?

This chapter will start with the rationale for using the skills of TCIT in the classroom, then move to describing each of the skills within the parent model, Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT). Next, the adapted skills for the classroom in TCIT will be shared along with research supporting positive student-teacher relationships and praise.

Rationale

Many teachers face the issue of disruptive behavior in the classroom and non-compliance from students. Increased class sizes and the rise of children diagnosed with ADHD, anxiety, and other mental health and behavioral disorders causes unwanted behavior in the classroom. There is little support and training for teachers for how to
handle these behaviors appropriately. Ten percent of kindergarteners show behavior problems or disrupt their class (Bilmes, 2012). Teachers spend much of their day managing behavior in the classroom rather than delivering curriculum, which, in turn, may cause them stress or frustration. These behaviors can affect the student-teacher relationship and the teacher’s ability to help modify such behaviors in these young children (Garbacz, Zynchinski, Feuer, Cater, Garbacz, 2014). According to Garbacz et al. (2014), “In early childhood and early elementary classrooms, the quality of emotional and instructional support from teachers has been shown to predict children’s academic, language, and social development” (p. 850).

TCIT is a relatively new approach used to decrease negative classroom behaviors in the classroom, increase compliance, create a positive teacher-child relationship, and decrease teacher stress (McIntosh, Rizza, & Bliss, 2000). Early studies have proven it to be an effective behavior modification program for young children in early childhood classrooms (Garbacz et al., 2014; Gershenson, Lyon, & Budd, 2010; Lyon, Gershenson, Farahnaz, Behling, Thaxter, & Budd, 2009; Neiter, & Thornberry, Knight-Brestan, 2013; Allen & Marshall, 2011; McIntosh, Rizza, & Bliss, 2000).

Parent Child Interaction Training (PCIT)

TCIT was adapted from a clinical model called Parent Child Interaction Training (PCIT) (McIntosh et al., 2000). Sheila Eyberg based PCIT off of the work of Diana
Baumsrind as a strategy for parents of preschoolers with Oppositional Defiant Disorder (Hembree-Kigin & McNeil, 2011). PCIT is a parent-training approach that incorporates play therapy and behavioral training to treat young children with behavioral issues (Hood & Eyberg, 2003). It is a manualized, individual intervention that draws from attachment, social-learning, and developmental theories (Naik-Polan & Budd, 2008).

PCIT is an evidenced-based practice that trained family therapists use to help parents of children with disruptive behaviors. (Neiter et al., 2013; Schumann, Foote, Eyberg, Boggs & Algina, 1998). Parents were taught to build a warm, responsive relationship with their children (Neiter, et al., 2013) while being observed and coached on responsiveness and limit setting (Schumann, Foote, Eyberg, Boggs & Algina, 1998). Schumann et al. (1998) discovered that after following PCIT coaching sessions “parents were observed to interact more positively with their children; they were better able to follow the child’s lead, praised the child more often, and were less critical” (p. 40).

Many of the parents in this study noted that their children no longer met criteria for Oppositional Defiant Disorder after completing PCIT therapy sessions.

According to Hembree-Kigin & McNeil (2011), when parents mastered the skills taught to them during PCIT sessions, their children displayed less destructive behavior, less aggression, and less hyperactivity. In addition, parental stress decreased and parents felt more confident and in control of their child’s behavior (Schumann et al., 1998).
Parental distress also appears to improve as child behavior improves (Schumann et al., 1998). Eyberg later determined that children and parents maintained their skills 3-6 years following PCIT training (Hood & Eyberg, 2003). Parents noticed an increase in their child’s positive behavior at home, they also reported having better control of their child’s behavior and felt confident in their PCIT skills (Hood & Eyberg, 2003).

One of the reasons PCIT works is because it “draws on both attachment and social learning theories in training parents to interact in new ways with their child” (Hood & Eyberg, 2003, p. 419). PCIT retrains parents how to play and interact with their child while building a trusting and a positive relationship. Sheila Eyberg developed an approach to shaping behavior of young children by integrating operant methods and traditional play therapy techniques (Hembree-Kigin & McNeil, 2011). She recognized that “play is the primary medium through which children develop problem-solving skills and work through developmental problems” (Hembree-Kigin & McNeil, 2011, p.35). Hembree-Kigin & McNeil (2011) noted that “many of the problems that arise in parent-child dyads are related to developmental struggles for autonomy or inappropriate developmental expectations held by parents” (p. 7).

Hembree-Kigin & McNeil (2011) stress the importance of direct coaching in the use of PCIT. They explain direct coaching as “the heart and art of PCIT” (p. 8) and outlined advantages for using a direct coaching therapy model. Direct coaching helps
correct errors before they become habit at home and allows therapists to quickly modify skills to meet the needs of each individual parent. Through the direct coaching, therapists’ encouragement and support builds parents’ self-confidence.

Weekly coaching sessions for PCIT last one hour in length for about fourteen weeks (Schumann et al., 1998). Through a one-way mirror overlooking the clinical therapy room, a therapist observes the play interaction of the parent and child (Hembree-Kigin & McNeil, 2011). The therapist provides positive feedback to the parent through a microphone and earpiece. Therapists code the parent’s communication using the Dyadic Parent-Child Interaction Coding System (DPICS). See Appendix C for example.

Child Directed Interaction (CDI) Skills

In PCIT parents attend a session without their child to limit distractions in order to learn “avoid” and “do” behaviors. Parents are given handouts to help them remember the skills (Hembree-Kigin & McNeil, 2011). The avoid behaviors in PCIT are: commands, questions, and critical statements or sarcasm. “Commands take the lead away from the child and set the stage for unpleasantness if the child disobeys” (Hembree-Kigin & McNeil, 2011, p. 56). Questions are the second thing parents are to avoid. Hembree-Kigin & McNeil (2011) state that avoiding question and rephrasing responses into reflections and imitations is the toughest skill to master. “Questions again take the lead away from the child and make the child feel like the parents may not be listening or
paying attention” (p. 56). Hembree-Kigin & McNeil (2011) note that using sarcasm and critical statements are not effective tools for decreasing problematic behavior. In fact, they state it may increase negative behavior because the child is still receiving attention from the parents.

In their book *Parent and Child Interaction Training*, Hembree-Kigin & McNeil (2011) describe CDI skills as Praising, Reflecting, Imitating, Describing, and being Enthusiastic. These skills make up the acronym PRIDE and are often referred to as “pride skills” in TCIT and PCIT. Parents use PRIDE skills for the first six weeks to build a relationship. Coaches collect data on the following PRIDE skills used by the parents with DPICS coding sheet: labeled praise, reflections, and behavior descriptions. Each of the PRIDE skills will be described in depth below.

**PRIDE Skills**

Praise

Labeled praise is specific praise for what a child is doing. For example, saying, “I like how you put your toy away,” instead of saying a general "good job”. This tells children exactly what you liked about their behavior rather than having them interpret the source of the praise.

Praise has long been used as a behavior modification for young children. Labeled praise in PCIT is used to help shape specific behaviors from children and to increase the
child’s self-esteem (Hembree-Kigin & McNeil, 2011). “Labeled praises are more efficient than unlabeled praises at conveying to the child exactly what can be said or done to earn praise in the future” (Hembree-Kigin & McNeil, 2011, p. 60). Parents are encouraged to praise their children every 30 seconds both in PCIT sessions and outside of their therapy sessions.

Reflections

Reflections simply restate or paraphrase what a child has said. For example,

Child: “Voom, voom, my truck is going under the bridge.”

Parent: “Your truck is going under the bridge.”

Reflections validate what the child is doing and show that the parent is listening and understanding (Gershenson et al., 2010). “Reflections communicate acceptance and understanding and let the child know that the parent is really listening” (Hembree-Kigin & McNeil, 2011, p. 62). When Hembree-Kigin & McNeil (2011) describe reflections, they note that the child is leading the conversation and is encouraged to extend the conversation. Reflective statements are to be kept as statements. “When parents repeat children’s words with a questioning inflection, children may perceive that parents are not listening, do not believe them, do not approve of them, or do not understand them (Hembree-Kigin & McNeil, 2011, p. 62).
Allen & Marshall (2011) found that children 8-10 years old with Specific Language Impairments made gains in expressive language when they used PCIT skills with their parents. This suggests that an appropriate language rich environment can be used to treat children with Specific Language Disorders with a mainstream approach in the classroom due to the imitation and reflection of the child’s speech.

Reflection is also used as an alternative to asking questions when interacting with a child. Questions are considered “Avoid” skills in TCIT and PCIT because adults too often reflect what the child say and does as a question.

Child: “I went to Grandma’s house!”
Teacher: “You went to your Grandma’s house?”

This is labeled a “tip up” because of the inflection in the adult’s voice at the end of a question. A reflection in TCIT/PCIT is not a question, but a simple statement repeating or paraphrasing what the child said. “Lucky you, you got to go to your Grandma’s house!”

According to McNeil and Hembree-Kigin (2011) adults use questions to elicit and start conversations with children, while this is an effective strategy, it can make the child feel interrogated, eliciting one word responses.

Imitation
“By imitating the child, the parent demonstrates that he or she is paying attention to the child’s activity and thinks it is interesting enough to do also. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and being imitated by powerful grown-ups is a self-esteem boost to young children” (Hembree-Kigin & McNeil, 2011, p. 63). In TCIT and PCIT parents and teachers are told to only imitate appropriate positive behaviors and ignore unwanted behaviors. For example, if a child is building a tower the parent will also start building a tower with blocks, but if the child throws a block, the parent would ignore and continue to build with blocks. The TCIT Coaches Training Manual (2012) notes that imitation models appropriate and positive interactions with the child. It is important that parents imitate appropriate behaviors to reinforce what is expected from the child.

Behavior Descriptions

Behavior descriptions describe the actions of the child. An example would be, “You are putting your toy away.” As stated by Hembree-Kigin & McNeil (2011) Eyberg (1999) coined the term “behavior description” to refer to the running commentary of the child’s ongoing activities” (p. 65). It is much like a commentator for a sports program giving the play-by-play. The parent describes what the child is doing using “you” as the sentence starter. When the child is building with blocks, for example, the parent would say “you are putting the red block on”, “you are building a tower,” or “you are making a tall tower”. According to Hembree-Kigin & McNeil (2011), behavior descriptions have
four purposes: First, they keep the child leading play; second, the parent is giving a play-by-play of the child’s actions, the child understands that the parent’s undivided attention is on them; third, descriptions can be used to help teach early concepts. Parents can label colors, positions, and help model oral language for young children. The last benefit of the descriptions is that it increases the child’s attention during play because they help the child organize ideas about play.

Enthusiasm

Being enthusiastic is the last PRIDE skill. Adults need to have inflection in their voice, show excitement, and make the playtime fun for the child. “This warm interactional style communicates interest and makes the playtime more enjoyable for both parent and the child” (Hembree-Kigin & McNeil, 2011, p. 65).

Parent Directed Interactions

After the parents have mastered and the PRIDE skills and begin to move towards a positive relationship with their child, they learn Parent Directed Interactions (PDI). PDI skills are used when parents need to be in control or put demands on their child. Parents are taught how to give effective commands to their children.

Matheson and Shriver (2005) reviewed research on effective commands by noting that effective commands increase child compliance. In citing Forehand & McMahon (1981), Matheson & Shriver (2005) “identified effective commands as those that are
directly stated, are specific and consist of one step, are developmentally appropriate, are phrased positively, and are given one at the time” (p. 202). Matheson & Shiver discovered that when effective commands are combined with praise, there was a direct positive correlation between academic behaviors and compliance.

Parents complete the program when they reach a mastery of skills on the Didactic Parent Child Interaction Coding Systems (DPICS) (Robinson & Eyberg, 1981). These are coding sheets for the therapist to keep track of the parent’s Child Directed Interaction (CDI) and Parent Directed Interaction (PDI) skills. PRIDE and PDI skills are coded to provide the therapist and with data on how often parents use the skills. There should be a balance of PRIDE and PDI skills. See Appendix C for PCIT coding sheet.

Expansion of PCIT

The skills used in PCIT have piqued the interest of researchers who wish to use it in other groups outside of children with Oppositional Defiant Disorder. One study, for example, found PCIT be an effective tool for decreasing stuttering in children 19-52 months because it changed the interaction style of the parents, which can affect a child’s fluency (Millard, Nicholas, & Cook, 2008).

Moore, Saylor, & Boyce (1998) discovered that PRIDE and PDI skills, were potentially beneficial for children who are medically fragile and high risk. These children ranged from pre-term infants to those high risk for development delay. The
research of Moore et al.’s (1998) findings suggest that “intervention that teaches parents appropriate ways in which to interact with their at risk children may be most effective in promoting developmental progress” (p. 100). Development would be stimulated when parents followed their child’s lead and used appropriate strategies to interact with their children with quality directives.

Teacher Child Interaction Training

The research of PCIT has led to the development of TCIT used in classroom settings with children 2-5 years old. Given that PCIT has been effective for parents, many wondered if it could be equally as effective in the classroom.

McIntosh et al. (2004) completed their first case study using the PCIT strategies, but adapted them for a teacher in the classroom with a two-year old child with behavioral problems including tantrums, telling the teacher “no,” and defying adult requests. The teacher participated in weekly TCIT training sessions with a researcher who observed her use of PRIDE skills and later Teacher Directed Interaction (TDI) skills. After each session, the teacher, Mrs. V, was coached on how to incorporate behavior descriptions and reflective statements into five-minute “Special Time” sessions. At times, Mrs. V even repeated statements verbatim from the researcher. The teacher noticed changes in the student, Monesha, and their rapport improved immediately with the praise. Monesha reacted positively to this change and there was a decrease in her negative behavior. She
still, however, engaged in explosive tantrums and threw toys around the room. The teacher was directed to ignore these behaviors and they did eventually decrease, but were not extinguished altogether.

Once the relationship with Monesha was secure, and Mrs. V was comfortable with the PRIDE skills, she started using TDI skills. The researcher again coached Mrs. V on how to give specific commands. Through this process, Mrs. V began to realize that Monesha’s oppositional behavior stemmed from her being confused about directions that were given in the classroom. By making directions in the classroom short and specific, Monesha’s compliance increased. At the end of the study, Mrs. V noted Monesha’s overall behavior had improved, and her own classroom management skills had improved as she used PRIDE and TDI skills with the class. Moreover, the entire class’s behavior improved as well. McIntosh et al. (2004) concluded that “the goal of TCIT is that through the thoughtful analysis of behavior, the interaction can be changed to promote a more positive atmosphere for learning” (p. 459).

A study by Filcheck, McNeil, Greco, & Bernard (2004) studied the use of TCIT skills in conjunction with a token economy system in one Head Start classroom. As with the results of McIntosh et al. (2004), the teacher was coached on how to implement PRIDE and TDI skills. The teacher practiced on sample groups of one to three students until mastery was reached, and then began using the skills with the entire class. The
teacher was videotaped during circle time and researchers coded her labeled praise, unlabeled praise, and criticism. She used simple sentences, effective commands, and a time-out procedure called “Sit and Watch." Results indicated the teacher was more satisfied with her classroom management techniques at the end of the study noting a decrease in inappropriate behavior that is consistent with McIntosh et al. (2000). The results of this study indicate that TCIT strategies could be used effectively with an entire classroom of students.

Lyon, Gershenson, Farhman, Thaxter, Behling, & Garbacz (2009) found that the “implementation of TCIT in other settings is an opportunity to support positive interactions between teachers and students and promote pro-social behavior in children beyond the clinical setting” (p. 283). They implemented TCIT in four Head Start classrooms. Six teachers were trained to mastery in PRIDE and TDI skills. They were coded using the Didactic Parent Child Interaction Coding Systems (DPICS) system (Eyberg & Robinson, 1981). See Appendix C for TCIT Coding Sheet. Teachers were given oral and written feedback during the training in order to refine their skills. The teachers rated their satisfaction with TCIT as positive, but had varying reliability using the strategies during follow-up visits. Teachers also found more success with PRIDE skills than those of TDI. Lyon et al. (2009) felt this was due to praise being easier to give to large groups of children and teachers felt more comfortable and familiar with this
specific skill. The findings indicated that TCIT was effective in changing teacher behavior and in decreasing criticism in the classroom.

Using TCIT to build relationships

TCIT focuses on improving teacher-child relationships, which has been proven to increase positive student behavior and compliance with tasks (Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004; Filcheck et al., 2004). Research shows that children with positive teacher-child relationships are likely to have academic and social success in school (Hamre & Pianta, 2004). This relationship is so important, in fact, that just the perception kindergarten teachers have of their students can impact that student’s school outcome up to eighth grade as studied by Hamre & Pianta (2004). They noted, “the quality of teacher-child relationships is a strong predictor of academic outcomes throughout elementary school and into middle school” (p. 634).

Research has shown that teachers who provide a supportive and secure environment play a significant role in invigorating children’s passion for learning, enhancing school success and improving behavioral development (Maldanado-Carreno & Votruba-Drzal, 2011). Feeling secure in the classroom environment is important for the child’s relationship with the teacher and the student’s ability to function in the class (White, 2013). By using PRIDE skills in the classroom, teachers follow the lead of students and continuously comment on positive aspects of a child’s behavior. This builds
confidence and trust for the student. “Students tend to behave well for teachers they like and who like them” (Bilmes, 2012 p. 33). Young children form attachments to their teachers, just as they do their parents (Maldanado-Carreno & Votruba-Drzal, 2011).

A teacher with a good relationship with his or her students demonstrates warmth, compassion, a positive affect, and open communication (Maldanado-Carreno & Votruba-Drzal, 2011). In contrast, a teacher with a poor relationship has difficulty managing student behavior, is negative, hostile, and disengaged (Maldanado-Carreno & Votruba-Drzal, 2011; White, 2010; Birch & Ladd, 1998). This kind of relationship is linked to negative social outcomes, negative behavioral outcomes, school avoidances, poor academic performance, and lack of cooperation in the classroom (Birch & Ladd, 1998; Hamre & Pianta, 2001).

PRIDE skills in TCIT

PRIDE skills in TCIT are very similar to PCIT. Below is the description for how they have been adapted for classroom use.

Praise

Praising appropriate behavior and ignoring inappropriate behavior in the classroom is not a new behavior strategy (Madsen, Becker, & Thomas, 1968). Musti-Rao & Haydon (2012) studied strategies that increase specific praise in the classroom. They discovered many teachers are not using praise or do not have an understanding about the
systematic effect praise can have on children. In fact, praise is typically inconsistent in
the classroom: “Using praise statements allows teachers to provide feedback on specific
student behavior they are trying to improve and can also be effective in providing
courage, building self-esteem, and promoting positive teacher-student
interactions” (p. 92). Teachers need to be more mindful of praise and the type of praise
they use in the classroom, to see positive results.

Some scholars criticize praise, claiming that it fulfills the adult’s agenda through
manipulation and exploitation. The strategy, they argue, diminishes children’s “pride and
enjoyment by telling them how to feel which can decrease their interest and motivation”
(Bayet, 2011 p. 124).

These critiques may be accurate when praise is used as a blanket statement like
“good girl” or “good boy”, which gives the child ambiguous feedback on the behavior
they exhibited that was acceptable; it allows the child to interpret for themselves. Hattie
and Timperley (2007) studied general praise given to students and found that it was
ineffective in increasing the desired behavior and learning in the classroom.

Behavior-specific praise indicates the behavior that is being praised (Moffat, 2011). Studies have shown that behavior-specific praise in the classroom can have a
positive effect on the teacher-student relationship (Moffat, 2011). In a review of the
literature, Moffat (2011) “concluded that using praise immediately following behavior
increased teacher use of praise statement while also increasing students’ targeted replacement behaviors (p. 52). In Moffat’s (2011) single study the desired behavior was overwhelmingly reinforced when specific praise was used.

Bayet (2011) also reviewed literature around the subject of praise and young children, finding that when children were giving specific praise, they “became motivated to choose problems that increased their own learning” (p. 124). Bayet (2011) concluded that there are right and wrong ways to praise children. Specific labeled praise helps children learn and explore with a healthy mindset around their abilities.

Bayet (2011) concluded his review of praise with recommendations for using praise with young children, including using praise that describes the behavior and making public statements in the classroom for children to exhibit the desired behavior. For example, a classroom teacher may say “Thomas has his eyes on me to show me he is listening.” The desired response from students would be to quickly reflect on their own behavior and change it to the desired behavior in order to receive praise from the teacher. Praise should be given for behaviors that are expected in the classroom. If turn-taking is encouraged in the classroom an appropriate praise response would be “I love how well Lucy and Jack took turns with the glue.” This is rewarding children for their contributions to the school community.

Reflections
According to the TCIT Coaches Training Manual (2012) reflections let the child be in control of the conversation, teaches the teacher how to effectively listen, models appropriate speech for children with speech delays, and establishes that the teacher and the child are conversational partners. An example of a reflection in a classroom setting would be:

Teacher: “I have 6 cookies and John has 5 cookies. How many do we have together?”

Child: “11”

Teacher (looking at the child’s paper): “You got 11 and drew a picture to find the answer”

The teacher could have easily just said “that is right.” Instead, by reflecting on the child’s answer he was able to validate the correct answer and the method the child used to solve the problem. This brought positive attention to the child and shows the child that the teacher is following the work they are doing in the classroom.

Imitation

In a classroom setting, Imitation can be used to validate answers to questions and facilitate conversations with young children. Although it seems awkward at first for teachers, students do not appear to be phased by the subtle language switch. An example of this would occur during a reading block would look like this:
Teacher: “Tell me what you are wondering about this story”

Child: “I’m wondering if Goldilocks ever comes back to the house.”
Teacher “You are wondering if Goldilocks comes back to the house.”

Imitations are appropriate to use in response to questions that don’t have a definite answer. The child doesn’t need to have an answer to have the answer to gain a better understanding of the story. Just seeing the child think beyond the story provides the teacher with information about the child’s comprehension of the story. The child also feels validated that their comment was heard because it was repeated back to them.

Behavior Descriptions

Often in early childhood classrooms we hear teachers say “Isaac is sitting with his hands in his lap” or “Gavin has his eyes on me”. Many times these statements are paired with praise, but even as standalones they are just as effective in giving a student positive attention for appropriate behavior. In a CDI session the teacher would describe positive behavior the child is exhibiting, providing a running commentary of the child’s appropriate behavior. Teachers need to be mindful of making sure they are only commenting on behaviors that are positive and appropriate. An example would be:

(teacher and child building with Legos)

Teacher: “You’re trying to put the green one on top of the red.”
Child getting frustrated, gives up, puts a blue Lego on, and then goes back to the green one.

Teacher: “You tried again with the green Lego. You got it on this time.”.

In this scenario, the teacher did not describe the child’s frustration, but instead ignored it and commented on the child going back and trying again. This reinforces the child’s ability to cope with frustration in an appropriate manner.

Behavior descriptions can also be used to subtly teach early learning concepts. In the example above the teacher labeled colors and used position words to describe what the child was doing.

Enthusiasm

It should go without saying that enthusiasm in the classroom is a must for children to learn. Mitchell (2013) reviewed the effect of enthusiasm in the classroom. He notes that while it can’t be proven to be the single most important factor to improve student engagement it certainly has a positive correlation to student achievement in the classroom. Patrick, Hinsley, & Kemper (2000) reiterated that enthusiasm can be linked to increased scores on assessments, positive school mindset, and increased student involvement.

See Appendix B for PRIDE Skills Overview.
TCIT Training

A large school district in the Twin Cities metro area took on the initiative of training elementary school social workers, school psychologists, preschool, kindergarten, and first-grade teacher in TCIT. The district sent a handful of social workers, special education administrators, and school psychologists to a PCIT training. These professionals then became the coaches and trainers for the TCIT workshop.

The training process was modeled after the studies mentioned above and the PCIT process. Each teacher was given a Training Manual that was designed collaboratively with a university studying TCIT and the school district. Teachers were given four half day training sessions over the course of two months. The training manual consisted of a general outline of training for each day, practice coding sheets, homework assignments related to each training day, and research articles on the development of TCIT. Each day is outlined below.

Day One

On the first day of training teachers were presented with a PowerPoint presentation with an overview of TCIT and an explanation of child directed skills (CDI), labeled praise, reflections, and behavioral descriptions. They were also introduced to the concept of negative talk and shown coding sheets. They then spent time practicing these skills with partners in role play situations.
Day Two

On the second day of TCIT training, teachers learned about the coaching aspect of TCIT. “Coaching increasing is being recognized as an effective desirable method to promote teachers’ incorporation of new skills into their classroom management practices” (Garbacz et al, 2014, p. 851). Participants role played PRIDE skills while practicing with an earpiece connected to a microphone on the coach. They learned about the coding process for CDI skills and practiced coding on each other.

According to the TCIT Coaches Training Manual (2012) some of the phrases coaches may say into the earpiece of the teacher would be:

“Nice job following child’s lead”
“Awesome behavior description”
“Excellent labeled praise”

Teachers and coaches are then sent out into the classroom and will be coached four times for about ten minutes with the microphone and earpiece. The coaching sequence goes as follows:

Session 1- Teacher and one child
Session 2- Teacher with two children
Session 3- Teacher with small group of children
Session 4- Teacher with entire class
The coach met with the teacher after each session and reviewed the PRIDE skills on the
DPICS coding sheet. *See Appendix C for TCIT Coding Sheet.*

Day Three

Day three consisted of reflection on the coaching sessions and learning about
Teacher Directed Interactions. TDI skills include: ignoring, catching students being
good, praising the opposite, giving effective commands, follow through on commands,
and when/then statements.

At the end of day three, participants role played and practiced with the
microphone and earpiece on how to give effective commands and recognize ineffective
ones.

Day Four

On this last day of training, teachers were taught Sit and Watch. This is a time-
out based system for increasing compliance. When TDI skills do not appear to be
working, teachers can choose to have a student go to Sit and Watch. The parameters are
established ahead of time in a classroom for what sort of behavior requires a Sit and
Watch.

In a Sit and Watch, the student is asked to move to a chair that is near the other
students. He/She will sit in the chair for one minutes to observe the behavior of the other
students. Once the child is calm, he/she can be invited back to join the class. It is important that the teacher praises the child’s first occurrence of the desired behavior.

The TCIT Coaches Training Manual (2012) emphasizes that a Sit and Watch is to be used to teach students that certain behaviors will not be tolerated, to decrease the thirst for negative attention, and to give students the opportunity to watch other children exhibit the desired behavior.

Teachers were given scripts to role play situations when a Sit and Watch was appropriate. When teachers felt comfortable with the Sit and Watch, they were given coding sheets and practiced coding behaviors on each other and watched videos of TCIT classrooms.

Summary

This literature review summarized the background of PCIT and TCIT. The PRIDE skills were defined in each program along with Parent Directed Interactions (PDI) and Teacher Directed Interactions (TDI). Also mentioned were behaviors to avoid to make the program the successful. Evidence that effective implementation of TCIT in the classroom can promote positive student-teacher relationships and increase compliance in the classroom while decreasing disruptive classroom behavior was provided. By using a coaching model, teachers are taught PRIDE and TDI skills to elicit positive behavior from their students. The training program for TCIT was explained.
In the next chapter, a modified TCIT program titled TCIT-lite for Pre-K to first-grade teachers will be described. Additional research on the importance of building relationships and using praise in the classroom will be highlighted. A presentation for TCIT-lite will be outlined with positive support for why using the model is effective.
CHAPTER 3

Project description

Introduction

This chapter will describe a behavior modification program called TCIT-lite based off of Teacher Child Interaction Training (TCIT) to help reduce behavior in the classroom and help support positive student-teacher interactions. This capstone project is a program that I designed to help answer the question: How can a modified Teacher Child Interaction Training (TCIT) program decrease behaviors in the classroom by supporting positive student-teacher relationships?

As noted in chapter two, training for TCIT involves days of learning and multiple coaching situations in order to be proficient in the skills. It is large commitment and financial undertaking for any school district. My program, TCIT-lite; which is targeted for preschool, kindergarten, and first-grade teachers, highlights the PRIDE skills from TCIT and decreases the training to 3 hours. The coaching model is still utilized because it an integral part of the TCIT learning process, but it is modified as well to meet the needs of the teachers and time constraints. The TCIT-lite training design will be outlined in the presentation following rationale for why this program is necessary.
Rationale

TCIT is in its infancy for classroom use. The research on using the PRIDE skills to increase compliance with students and decrease disruptive behaviors is promising.

Chapter Two described the background of TCIT and the benefits of using the skills in the classroom. TCIT-lite will help teachers establish positive relationships with students by using the PRIDE skills in individual sessions. Building positive student-teacher relationships and and offering praise were selected as the two targeted skills for teachers because the research is overwhelmingly positive that these two skills will have a significant effect on student behavior and academic performance.

Student-Teacher Relationship

The first target strategy of TCIT-lite is to establish a strong student-teacher relationship. A child’s emotional security in the classroom can increase functioning, self-awareness, and attention to tasks (White, 2012). White (2012) also noted that if a child has a close relationship with the teacher it can have a positive effect on his/her social, behavioral, cognitive, and academic development. Split, Koomen, Thijs, & Van Der Leij (2012) “believed that children use teachers as a secure base and haven, which fosters children’s school adjustment and learning” (p. 305).

Hamre & Pianta (2001) published a study that followed 179 children from kindergarten to eighth grade and studied the effect of each student’s relationship with
their teacher. The Teacher-Child Rating Scale provided data on the child’s behavioral and social emotional growth at the end of kindergarten. Teachers also completed the Student-Teacher Rating Scale at the end of the kindergarten school year to assess their perception of the relationship they had with their students. Grades, work habits, and discipline records were collected from students during first through eighth grade as a way to assess each child’s academic and behavioral success. The results suggested that the quality of a child’s relationship with the teacher can be a predictor for behavioral and academic success throughout elementary school. Based on this study, if a kindergarten teacher perceives to have a negative student-teacher relationship, the student is more likely to have a disadvantage for behavioral and academic achievements.

Pianta & Stuhlman (2004) performed a similar study with 490 first-grade students. Student-teacher behavior assessments were gathered from preschool, kindergarten, first grade teachers. The results echoed similar studies: The teacher’s negative perception of his/her relationship with students in preschool and kindergarten affected the child’s behavior and cognitive abilities in first grade.

With widespread agreement that the student-teacher relationships plays a significant role in a child’s academic success in school, Maldonado-Carreno & Drzul (2011) set out to explore the longitudinal data from kindergarten through fifth grade. They obtained data from 1,077 families in ten cities. Cognitive skills were measured by
teacher report, field interviews and assessment using the Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-
Educational Battery in first, third, and fifth grade. Once again, the research showed that 
the quality of student-teacher relationships were correlated with a child’s academic 
success.

This research suggests that the teacher-student relationship must be a priority 
when trying to change the behavior of a child in the classroom. TCIT strategies give the 
teacher an avenue to build a relationship with the use of PRIDE skills. By following the 
child’s lead and getting to know their students with PRIDE skills, teachers are increasing 
their ability to form a positive relationship with their students.

Praise

The second target strategy of TCIT-lite is praise; which has been proven 
to be an effective strategy in changing behavior in children. Several studies have focused 
on the use of behavior specific praise/labeled praise as an effective tool in the classroom. 
decreased inappropriate behavior in the classroom when kindergarten, first, and second-
grade teachers were trained on the use of behavior-specific praise with children at risk for 
emotional and behavioral disorders. They also observed that typically developing 
students and at risk students did not need an exorbitant amount of behavior specific praise 
for the behavior to be changed (Allday et al., 2012).
Fullerton, Conroy, & Correa, (2009) evaluated the use of specific praise statements with young children at risk for emotional and behavioral disorders. Four teachers were trained on how to give specific praise to four students with behavioral concerns. Through coded observations, the researchers noted any changes related to specific praise in the child’s engagement and compliance in the classroom. All four children exhibited an increase in desired classroom behaviors and a decrease in disruptive behaviors.

**TCIT-lite**

TCIT-lite is an abbreviated program for Pre-K, kindergarten, and first grade teachers to use in their classrooms to support positive student-teacher interactions and decrease positive behavior. Teachers will participate in a three-hour presentation on how to use the PRIDE skills in their classroom and receive materials to follow the TCIT-lite program.

The first step of TCIT-lite is to identify a student exhibiting problematic behavior such as noncompliance, off task, or disruptive behaviors in the classroom and collect data on one specific behavior. Lee, Vostal, Lylo, & Hua (2011) outlined five steps general education teachers should use in collecting data for an identified behavior. First the teacher should schedule a time for data collection and build it into his/her classroom
schedule. They suggest writing the data collection into lesson plans. The second step is to specify the problem behavior by making it as specific as possible. The third step is to collect the data. The teacher should find a method that is efficient and functional. Data should be collected at the same time each day for the same duration of time. Fourth, the teacher should analyze data in an organized visual like a graph or table. Lastly, teachers need to analyze the data and use it to determine if interventions are effective. “All of the time spent collecting and graphing data is wasted if the data is not interpreted and used to make decisions regarding programs” (Lee et al., 2011 p. 28).

The TCIT-lite program requires teacher engagement in a one-on-one Child Directed Interaction (CDI) sessions using the PRIDE skills with the identified student at least three times a week. Each CDI session should be a minimum of five minutes. A morning CDI session is optimal because it gives the student and the teacher a positive start to the day. Data should be gathered before the CDI sessions start, at week three, and at week six. This is a six-week program because the documentation can be used as a Response to Intervention (RTI) if the child is being referred to a problem solving team or special education evaluation in their school.

Once the individual CDI session is complete, teachers are encouraged to practice the PRIDE skills throughout the day based on their comfort level with the class as a whole and with special attention to the student. This increases the teacher’s practice of
the skills and helps them become habit when teaching. The teacher is providing consistent behavior-specific praise to all students in the class. It is important for the identified child to be aware of the behaviors being praised in the classroom.

Presentation Framework

Malcolm Knowles (1992) outlined two principles for adult learners in conference settings. He stated that the speaker should engage the audience in the process of inquiry instead of being indifferent receivers of content. Throughout the TCIT-lite workshop participants are engaged in activities to spark inquiry through role-playing activities and reflection. Knowles’ (1992) second principle specifies that the speaker know the audience by knowing “their backgrounds, interests, needs, problems, and concerns” (p. 11). TCIT-lite is helping teacher solve some of the concerns and needs in their classrooms.

The TCIT-lite presentation strategies make it an effective behavior management program because it is not a one shot professional development opportunity. It utilizes effective strategies such as reflection and peer coaching to engage, motivate, and instill change in the teacher’s behavior in order to be more effective in maintaining positive relationships with students.

In their book Student Achievement Through Staff Development, Joyce and Showers (2002) outline what makes successful staff development for schools. Their
extensive research on effective staff development has shown support for peer coaching for professional development to be successful for teachers.

Teachers learn from each other in the process of planning instruction, developing the materials to support it, watching each other work with students, and thinking together about the effect of their behavior on student learning. The collaborative work of peer coaching is much broader than observations and conferences (p. 94).

In TCIT-lite peer coaching is used to help teachers change their behavior in the classroom. Coaches are supporting participants by helping them plan and monitor their use of the PRIDE skills in the classroom.

Zhao (2012) defines reflection as “the process through which teachers comprehend and learn from their teacher experiences and assign significance to their teacher practice” (p. 57). Teachers attending the TCIT-lite workshop are involved in the reflection activities during each step. Forde, McMahon, McPhee, & Patrick (2006) signified the importance of reflection for teachers during professional development in their book, *Professional Development, Reflection and Enquiry*. They state that reflection helps teachers become open-minded and flexible with change, allows them to analyze their underlying assumptions and beliefs, and empowers them to move towards advocacy for their beliefs.
The TCIT-lite presentation is a condensed version of TCIT training. The workshop will last approximately three hours as compared to four half-days and is done during a staff development day. A CDI toy box is provided to each participant with playdough, small bag of Legos or other building manipulatives, markers, paper, coloring sheets, and a list of other toys and materials to include that may available in the teacher’s classroom.

The first training includes five coaches for twenty participants. The coaches are the teachers, social workers, and school psychologists who participated in the TCIT training when it was an active program in the district. These coaches have volunteered to provide support during training and will be compensated for their time. This helps bring TCIT back in as a tool in their toolbox as well. The presentation starts with the compelling data supporting strong student-teacher relationships and then continues with a brief history of TCIT and the coaching method of using the earpiece and microphone to reinforce the teacher’s positive language. This is approximately twenty minutes long.

Participants break up into five groups of four and are mentored by a TCIT coach. Each group sits at a table together and works together throughout the presentation. Each coach presents on a PRIDE skill. Modeling of praise, reflections, and behavior descriptions are presented in thirty to sixty second videos of a CDI session. Participants then role play with a partner each skill using a script. Coaches mentor and answer
questions during role play sessions. The coach focusing on praise place special emphasis on the skill and encourage teachers to use unlabeled praise purposefully in at least two learning blocks throughout their day. This portion of the workshop will be approximately one hour in length with roughly ten to twelve minutes for each PRIDE skill.

Once each PRIDE skill is practiced, participants reflect on the experience of using the language in TCIT within their group of four and their coach. The coach has leading questions to help spark reflective responses. After the reflection period, participants work with a partner and practice all if the of PRIDE skills in one 5 minute CDI session using the CDI toy box and ear piece while the coach sits off to the side with a microphone. The coach codes the participant pretending to be the teacher and gives positive feedback into microphone. *See Appendix B for coding sheet.* Coaches look for the teacher in the role play scenario to have at least two of each of the PRIDE skills. When the five-minute role play scenario is over the coaches review the coding sheet with the teacher and participants switch roles and repeat the process.

Once all four participants have played both roles, they share their experience and feelings about the process with each other. After thirty minutes of role playing with coaching practice, the participants reconvene as a large group. Each teacher receives handouts and resources to help guide them through the PRIDE skills in their daily routines with a student. Coaches are available for support and mentorship throughout the
year and follow up with participant via e-mail and phone calls. Coaches schedule two more coaching sessions using the microphone and earpiece. Participants are encouraged to seek support from their coaches and colleagues who participated in the program.

For the last 30 minutes to end the presentation, participants reconvene with their group to work to identify problem behaviors and how to take data. Each participant leaves with a sample data form they created to meet their own needs.

See Appendix A for PowerPoint slides of the presentation

Summary

The workshop framework and manual for the TCIT-lite program was introduced in this chapter. TCIT-lite will help Pre-K to first grade teachers increase positive interactions with the students in their classroom through the use of PRIDE skills. TCIT-lite is about building those relationships and teaching teachers how to use specific language skills to help the children feel heard, in control, and praised by his/her teacher. Each teacher is supported by a coach and has handouts to reference. The next chapter will be my reflections on this capstone project, limitations and implications, and conclusion of the project.
CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

Introduction

This Capstone Project sought to the answer the question: How can a modified Teacher Child Interaction Training (TCIT) program decrease problem behaviors in Pre-K to first-grade classrooms by supporting positive student-teacher interactions? I created a modified TCIT program called TCIT-lite using the PRIDE skills and additional praise to help teachers build a positive relationship with their students to increase appropriate behavior in the classroom. In this chapter, I will reflect on what I have learned through the process of writing this capstone project. I will identify specific aspects of the existing literature that proved especially useful to my study and suggest next steps for both policy implementation and future research. Finally, I will discuss my study’s limitations and address the ways in which I plan to disseminate my findings to educators interested in TCIT-lite.

Writing Reflection

This capstone process proved that I am a researcher, writer, and learner. It is hard to believe I am at the end of my Masters of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program at Hamline University. Looking back at Chapter One, I can see how much I have matured throughout this process. The student who started Chapter One six years ago was full of
idealism and passion. The student at the end of this process still holds that passion, but now holds knowledge on how to successfully execute that passion.

As a writer, I experienced a waves of inadequacy, discovery, and achievement. I started this capstone five years ago but then set it on the backburner. My life felt full and I was struggling to keep it all together. In retrospect, I should have pushed through and finished the project, but at the time I felt a little break would help me find focus. That little break was comfortable until the capstone started to loom large over my head. When the opportunity presented itself to finish, I knew I had to take it. I started a capstone thesis and turned it into a capstone project, which was no easy feat.

Dusting off the cobwebs was difficult. The academic writer in me lost her way. It took more time and energy than I thought to get back on track. With their guidance, my reviewers and advisor played an integral part in helping me feel like a successful writer. I learned how to be vulnerable, receive constructive feedback, and use all the resources around me. I realized that the more I reached out, the more comfortable I became with the capstone process. Sticking to a schedule to work around my needs, helped me manage my time without becoming stressed or worried that I would not complete the project.
Research Reflection

I learned to let the existing body of research guide me. I first struggled with finding the right question that would encompass all I wanted to share and would allow me to transform my original thesis into a project. Once I listened to other scholars’ research and let it guide me towards positive student-teacher relationships, my question fell into place. TCIT has greatly improved my relationships with students and their level of compliance. When I discovered research that strongly supported positive student-teacher relationships I felt even more convinced that I had to create a modified TCIT program for the Pre-K to first-grade teachers in my district.

The longitudinal studies from Hamre and Pianta (2001) and Hamre and Stuhlman (2004) significantly influenced the path of my project. Their results proving the impact of a positive student-teacher relationship on a child’s academic, behavioral, and social-emotional health resonated strongly with me. In my experience as a kindergarten teacher, I have noticed increased stress on teachers and students having to prove they are meeting academic benchmarks. This stress tends to manifests itself as anxiety in students, which can resemble misbehavior in the classroom setting. When students’ anxiety is combined with the pressure teachers feel to meet these high expectations and demands, our youngest students’ needs are not met. Social-emotional education has been sliced from the curriculum to make room for more academic training. These studies proved that
teachers must find a way to bring back the social-emotional learning and focus on relationships with students. I believe TCIT-lite can help teachers balance all that is on their plates.

Other studies that had influence on this project were Gershenson, Lyon, & Budd (2010) and Lyon, Gershenson, Farahnaz, Behling, Thaxter, & Budd, 2009. Their research on TCIT and its effectiveness for classroom teachers sparked its growth. These studies proved that systematic use of the PRIDE skills could decrease negative classroom behavior and create a positive student-teacher relationship.

Impact and Limitations

I hope to give this presentation to my district as part of our curriculum redesign to bring standards-based teaching into the classroom. Social emotional standards and benchmarks need to carry as much weight as the academic standards. With district support, I believe this program could be carried out in all the Pre-K to first-grade classrooms. If all Pre-K to first-grade teachers could commit to learning and using the PRIDE skills on a daily basis, we will decrease student anxiety and increase their appropriate behavior and compliance. Also, teachers will feel more confident in their ability to manage misbehavior in their classrooms.

Although this project has many benefits, it is not without its share of limitations. The first limitation is that of visibility and awareness of the problem. That is, school staff
must see positive student-teacher relationships as a need and sign up for the program. Convincing administrators and teachers to step away from academics is not an easy task. Even teachers who know how valuable these skills are, feel like their hands are tied. Standards, benchmarks, and data are driving curriculum. Unfortunately, social-emotional skills are not considered a priority and a shift is necessary in order to for all needs to be met in the classroom. Real work in the classroom can happen when teachers and administrators start to reject the current path and begin to adjust it to prioritize social-emotional learning.

Secondly, staff that have trained in TCIT must be willing to coach others. This is crucial for the program to have long term success. Scheduling can be an issue for coaching opportunities and substitute teachers will need to be called in for teachers to coach. Staff members may find it difficult to travel to different buildings to coach.

In addition, previously trained staff will need a refresher course on the PRIDE skills and coaching model in TCIT. I found that when I created the videos and modeled a CDI session, I struggled with being consistent and systematic. This could be done as a webinar or an additional meeting during school day with substitute teachers covering classrooms.

An additional scheduling limitation is that teachers must find time in their schedule to have five-minute Child Directed Interaction (CDI) sessions. Five minutes in
a Pre-K to first grade classroom is difficult to find. Students are typically at different levels going in many different directions. Teachers will need to find additional supervision for their class. Principals, social workers, school psychologists, or para professionals could provide this supervision in order for the teacher to engaged in the CDI session.

The third limitation is that of compensation for participation and materials. All participants and coaches need to compensate for their time outside of the classroom. Also the program would need to secure district funds for presentation materials such as, printing and folders and the Child Direction Interaction (CDI) box that will go to each teacher. The microphone and ear piece system would need to readily available for teachers during coaching sessions. Moreover, teachers need time and energy to sustain a positive relationship with students. Teachers must consciously assess and re-evaluate the relationship they have with each student.

I see this process growing one to two coaches at each building who can support teachers in the PRIDE skills and provide more classroom coaching to help teachers habitualize these skills. These coaches can also be immediate contacts and trainers for new staff. Despite the above limitations, TCIT- lite will be able to increase positive student-teacher relationship through the use of PRIDE skills.
Evaluating Results

Once the TCIT-lite is in place in all schools, it is imperative that the program is evaluated for its effectiveness. Each teacher is taking data on a student’s behavior when they do a one-on-one CDI session with a student. Coaches will be responsible for collecting the data from their teachers. I will be the one that would analyze that data to understand the validity of the program. Teacher data on their experience with TCIT-lite will also need to be gathered and used to continually shape the program so it is working for the intended purpose of increasing positive student-teacher relationships. See Appendix D for TCIT-lite survey.

Summary

Only time will tell if the TCIT-lite program can become a reality. I will continue to use the skills in my classroom because of the results I have experienced with my own students. Throughout this capstone, I gave strong arguments supporting the importance of positive student-teacher relationships for Pre-K to first-grade students. I examined the background for TCIT and outlined the method for training school staff in TCIT-lite using the PRIDE skills. My learning journey is reflected in this capstone and the capstone project and will continue to grow as I prioritize and support positive student-teacher relationships throughout my teaching career.
APPENDIX A

PowerPoint Presentation
WHAT IS TCIT?

• What do you already know about TCIT?
• Based off of PCIT
• What does the research say?
• Teacher testimonials

20 min.
What is TCIT?

Describe method. Give background of TCIT, discuss PCIT. Mention acronyms
PRIDE/Child directed skills/Teacher directed skills

Discuss studies by Eyberg. Testimonials from current teachers using TCIT in their classroom.
WHY TCIT-LITE?

- Build Relationships
- Decrease Problem Behavior
- Teach students to self-regulation
Describe TCIT-lite and relationship to TCIT
Spend 2-3 minutes on each reason giving research to support.

Building relationships - discuss studies by Hamre and Pianta (2001) and Hamre and Stuhlman (2004)

Decrease problem behavior - discuss what kind of behavior is problematic. Difference between pet peeve and problem behaviors

Teach students self regulation - by using praise and modeling when appropriate behaviors are seen.
5-10 minutes going through process
Brief description of PRIDE skills acronym
*reference PRIDE handout in folder
Click on each skill to go the screen. Each coach will present one of the skills.
Each one will start with a video and end with a role playing session with a script specific to each skill.
Video link-https://youtu.be/KsS4H9nRaI8
20 minutes discussing and role playing praise
Ask teachers what they already know about praise

Role play script-
Child is playing calmly with toys teacher should be practicing labeled praise.
At some point the child should become upset or misbehavior to allow the teacher to practice ignoring and praise the appropriate behavior.
Switch roles.
Video link-https://youtu.be/1t51pSj5MgY
15 minutes
Extra emphasis on what to do when a child asks a question

Role play script
Scene one playing with Legos
- I played hockey last night.
- The other team cheated. (should not reflect this, it’s a negative statement)
- Do you like hockey?
- My sister is in 4th grade.
- I have lots of Lego sets at home.

Scene two: Switch roles
- My favorite is Lego friends.
- I have 4 sets.
- My brother broke one of them. (should not reflect this, it's a negative statement)
- Are there any Lego guys?
- I really like guys.
15 minutes
Coach how to only imitate appropriate actions

Role Play Script
Child picks a toy. Role play a CDI session by imitating what the child is doing. At some point the child should throw a toy or misbehave. This allows the teacher to practice ignoring and imitate appropriate play once the child resumes appropriate play.
Switch roles.
Video link-https://youtu.be/lFOp4ZfMnQ
15 minutes

Role play Scenario
Child picks a toy from CDI bin and begins playing. The teacher should describe the appropriate action of the child. The child should become slightly upset or misbehave to allow the teacher to practice and describe only positive appropriate behavior. Switch roles.
ENTHUSIASM

- Be in the moment
- Be genuine
- Enjoy!

5 minutes
COACHING MODEL

- Coaches will observe 3 CDI sessions and coach using the microphone and earpiece to reinforce your pride skills
- Use your coach for questions and concerns...they are there for you
- Use teammates for support
WHAT SPECIFIC BEHAVIORS FROM STUDENTS HINDER YOUR TEACHING?

1. Write down behaviors on a post-it
2. Each group will share post-its

Take 5 minutes for each group to write down behaviors on a post-it
Take 5-10 minutes to talk about about behaviors with each group
presenting their post-its
20-30 minutes to talk about data—in your group brainstorm and create a data system that works for you.
TCIT-LITE IMPLEMENTATION COACHING- 3 SESSIONS

**CDI session**
- Approximately 5 minutes
  - 3 times per week
  - 6 weeks
- Barriers?
  - Solution!

**Praise**
- Choose learning blocks that will work best
- Label positive praise “catch” the student being appropriate

**Post data**
- Take data on the same behavior 6 weeks after individual CDI sessions.
- Continue or decrease CDI sessions based on data analysis
APPENDIX B

Handouts

PRIDE Skills in Parent Child Interaction Therapy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRAISE appropriate behavior</td>
<td>Making positive statements about the child’s behavior. Most effective when Labeled (specific), but can also be Unlabeled (non specific).</td>
<td>Increases specified behavior. Contributes to warm interaction.</td>
<td>“Terrific” (Unlabeled praise) “I’m proud of you for being polite” (labeled praise)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFLECT appropriate speech</td>
<td>Repeating or paraphrasing child’s statement(s).</td>
<td>Demonstrates listening/understanding. Reinforces speech.</td>
<td>Child: “I made a star” Adult: ”You made a star.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMITATE appropriate behavior/play</td>
<td>Doing the same thing as the child.</td>
<td>Give positive attention to good behavior. Promotes cooperation</td>
<td>Child is building a tower. Adult begins to stack blocks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DESCRIBE appropriate behavior</td>
<td>Stating specifically what the child is doing.</td>
<td>Communicates interest in and reinforces child’s prosocial play. Hold’s child’s attention.</td>
<td>“I see you drew a smiley face!” “We are building a house.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be ENTHUSIATIC</td>
<td>Tone and body language demonstrate excitement.</td>
<td>Increases warmth of interaction. Keeps the child interested.</td>
<td>Voice is playful with lots of inflection. Frequent smiles.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gershenson, Lyon, Budd 2010 (p. 264)
TCIT-Lite Coding Sheet

Teacher Name: ___________________________ Coaches Name: ___________________________

Student: ___________________________ Date: ___________ Time: ___________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIDE Skills</th>
<th>Occurrences (Tally)</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behavior</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Action Verbs: moving, looking, writing, holding, pushing, sitting)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflection</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(shortened, Exact, Extended, Elaborated)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Labeled Praise</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Thank you FOR, I like it WHEN, Great idea, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unlabeled Praise</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Lack a “for what”-good job, awesome, perfect)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enthusiasm</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(giving child undivided attention)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from the TCIT Coaches Training Manual (2012), DePaul University TCIT-U and South Washington County Schools, Cottage Grove, MN.
Child Directed Interaction (CDI) Toy Box Ideas

- Legos
- Playdough
- Coloring Materials
- Matchbox cars
- Tinkertoys
- Magnetic blocks
- Lincoln Logs
- Mr. Potato Head
- Dollhouse with small people
  - Bristle Blocks
  - Toy Garage with cars
  - Waffle Blocks
- School bus with riders
  - Erector set
- Toy Farm with animals
- Magnetic picture board

Toys to AVOID:

**Ones that encourage rough play**
(balls, bats, boxing gloves, punching bags)

**Ones that lead to aggressive play**
(toy guns, toy swords, toy cowboys and Indians, superhero figures)

**Ones that could get out of hand and require limit-setting**
(art projects and painting)

**Ones that have pre-set rules**
(board games, card games)

**One that discourage conversation**
(books, audio)

APPENDIX C

Coding Sheets

PCIT Coding Sheet

TCIT Coaches Training Manual (2012), DePaul University TCIT-U and South Washington County Schools, Cottage Grove, MN.
APPENDIX D

Presentation Survey

Available online: https://goo.gl/forms/GyCsO31t0pesnPDj1

TCIT-lite Evaluation
Please submit feedback regarding the TCIT-lite.

1. TCIT-lite Presentation
   Mark only one oval per row.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The length of the presentation was appropriate.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentations were clear and organized.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role play situations were helpful.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I left excited to use the PRIDE skills.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I left with a data taking tool.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. TCIT-lite in the classroom
   Mark only one oval per row.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My coach was helpful.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I used my coach frequently.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I completed a 6 week session with student.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I saw improvements in behavior.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will continue to refine PRIDE skills.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have positive relationships with my students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. What aspects of TCIT lite were most helpful for you?

____________________________________

____________________________________

____________________________________

____________________________________

4. Comments

____________________________________

____________________________________

____________________________________

____________________________________

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BIBLIOGRAPHY


Joyce, B. (2002). In Showers B. (Ed.), *Student achievement through staff development, 3rd edition* (3rd ed.) : ASCD.


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