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# Classroom Strategies Coaching Model: Integration of Formative Assessment and Instructional Coaching

*This article describes the theory, key components, and empirical support for the Classroom Strategies Coaching (CSC) Model, a data-driven coaching approach that systematically integrates data from multiple observations to identify teacher practice needs and goals, design practice plans, and evaluate progress towards goals. The primary aim of the model is to improve teachers' use of specific evidenced-based instructional and behavioral management practices at the classroom level. Key components of the model include*

*integration of instruction and classroom behavior management; brief structured problem solving framework; formative assessment with a validated observation instrument; establishing measurable goals; and visual performance feedback. Results from a randomized controlled study offer emerging evidence of the potential impact of formative assessment and coaching on teacher classroom practices in elementary schools. Additionally, we offer recommendations for future research and practice.*

**O**VER THE past decade, research has consistently demonstrated that teachers can have a powerful and positive impact on students' learning. Thus, it is no surprise that

enhancing teacher effectiveness has become a major concern. Instructional coaching has become a popular method for enhancing teacher effectiveness and supporting teachers' professional growth (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Marzano & Simms, 2013). Instructional coaching typically encompasses an expert that works with teachers through observing, modeling, and providing feedback to facilitate new practices, change current practices, and sustain best

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practices (Joyce & Showers, 2002; Kretlow & Bartholomew, 2010). A growing body of evidence supports instructional coaching as an effective method for changing teacher practices in the classroom (e.g., Briere, Simonsen, Sugai, & Myers, 2013; Dufrene, Lestremau, & Zoder-Martell, 2014).

Current coaching approaches have several limitations, such as focusing on individual students versus classroom ecology, changing single target behaviors instead of multiple behaviors simultaneously, and targeting specific content areas or skills only, instead of operating on them systematically (e.g., Coffee & Kratochwill, 2013; Dufrene, et al., 2014). Moreover, coaches have few empirically supported instruments at their disposal for providing data on classroom instruction and behavioral management practices, as well as instruments that can monitor and evidence change in teaching practices over time. This article describes a new instructional coaching approach, the Classroom Strategies Coaching (CSC) Model, which promotes teachers' classroom practices by using an empirically validated assessment of instructional and classroom behavioral management practices to guide the coaching process. A description of the CSC Model, key components, and empirical support for the model are presented.

### **CSC Model**

The CSC is a brief and collaborative intervention centered on using multiple classroom observations to gather data and generate feedback for promoting changes in teachers' use of empirically supported instructional and behavioral management strategies (Hattie, 2009; Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). In the CSC Model, coaches work with teachers for several brief sessions to identify teacher practices for change, develop implementation plans, monitor implementation, and provide ongoing feedback. Throughout all stages of the coaching process, coaches conduct ongoing classroom observations to assess specific teaching practices and use these data to inform the process.

The CSC makes explicit use of an empirically validated classroom observation assessment, the Classroom Strategies Assessment System (CSAS), to gather data on teachers' classroom practices and generate performance feedback for guiding coaching (Reddy, Fabiano, Dudek, & Hsu, 2013a). The CSAS measures teachers' use of specific evidence-based instructional and behavioral management practices and was designed to be used formatively. This measure helps create a collaborative data driven process for enhancing teachers' effectiveness that places equal emphasis on instructional and classroom behavioral management strategies. Subsequently, the CSC's design and use of the CSAS enables the intervention to be academic content-neutral, agnostic of grade level, as well as adaptive to general education and special education contexts.

### **Theoretical and Empirical Underpinnings**

The CSC Model is grounded in the adult learning, social learning, and behavioral consultation literatures (Bandura, 1977; Bergan, 1977; Knowles, 1984). Adult learning theory suggests adults are: (a) problem focused and goal oriented, (b) practical in their approach to learning, and (c) able to learn best by doing (Knowles, 1984). The CSC model addresses these tenets of adult learning by building upon the behavioral consultation frameworks (Bergan & Kratochwill, 1990; Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2008). Teachers are viewed as active collaborators with coaches throughout the decision-making process. The CSC is practice and skill focused, goal oriented, and uses a problem-solving framework to identify teachers' immediate classroom needs, develop implementation plans, and evaluate implementation. This approach goes beyond the indirect service delivery approach of behavioral consultation by having coaches frequently conduct classroom observations. In short, the model aims to provide a brief, job-embedded intervention that focuses on goals and immediate skill needs identified by the teacher and uses active learning to guide the process.

The CSC also incorporates the observational learning and modeling concepts from social learning theory within its coaching meetings. In CSC sessions coaches model effective implementation of instruction and behavior management strategies. This is then combined with opportunities to practice in the coaching session, as well as ongoing classroom observations to monitor implementation and subsequent feedback from the coach. Instructional coaching research has found the combination of modeling, observation, and feedback as highly effective methods for promoting changes in teachers' practices (Joyce & Showers, 2002; Kretlow & Bartholomew, 2010).

The CSC model changes classroomwide ecology by focusing on teachers' use of evidence-based Tier 1 strategies that are effective for all students in the classroom (Reddy, Fabiano, & Jimerson, 2013). Furthermore, this model views effective teaching and teachers' skills as an interactive system that requires more than just one effective strategy or expertise in a single model of teaching. The CSC model assumes teachers' use of classroom strategies is inter-related, sequential, as well as co-occurring in the classroom and that strategies are implemented in multiple combinations with each other (e.g., Reddy et al., 2013a; Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006).

## **Core Components of the Coaching Model**

### **1. Integration of Instruction and Classroom Behavioral Management**

As an approach specifically designed for instructional coaching, the teacher practices addressed by the CSC model draw heavily from the effective instruction literature. A long history of process-product research and meta-analytic reviews have demonstrated strong relationships between specific teacher actions, behaviors, or skills, and student achievement outcomes and subsequently have established a general consensus on the features of effective instruction (e.g., Bennet, 1988; Hattie, 1992; Marzano et al., 2001;

Wang, Haertel, & Wahlberg, 1990; Wenglinsky, 2002). The CSC taps into strategies from the direct instruction, differentiated instruction, and constructivist models of teaching, as well strategies for promoting students' higher order thinking and metacognition, opportunities to respond, and providing students' feedback on their learning. Furthermore, the CSC model views classroom behavioral management as an integral component of effective instruction and these literatures have identified distinct behaviors and skills needed for effective classroom management, such as proactive management, establishing rules, routines, and positive reinforcement (e.g., Acker & O'Lerry, 1987; Gable, Hester, Rock, & Hughes, 2009; Kounin, 1970; O'Leary, Kaufman, Kass, & Drabman, 1970).

### **2. Formative Assessment with an Empirically Validated Classroom Observation Instrument**

Within the CSC model, coaches conduct frequent classroom observations with the CSAS, which permits the use of ongoing data related to teachers' practices, and can be used to provide feedback. The CSAS is a user-friendly multi-dimensional assessment that has been utilized for formative instructional coaching of pre-service teachers and in-service teachers, as well as teacher evaluation (Reddy, Kettler & Kurz, 2015). The CSAS includes two forms: (a) Observer Form (CSAS-O), which can be used by instructional coaches for observing classrooms, and (b) a teacher self-report form (CSAS-T) to self-evaluate their practice and progress throughout the coaching process. The two forms separately produce visual performance feedback (i.e., bar and time series graphs), that can be used to depict information about teachers' use of strategies during observed lessons, and how strategy use changes over time. Together, the two forms increase shared understanding between coaches and teachers on the features of effective instruction by establishing a common vocabulary of key teacher behaviors and skills that can be used in coaching discussions.

The CSAS contains three components (a) Part 1 Strategy Counts, (b) Part 2 Rating Scales

(Instruction and Behavior Management), and (c) Part 3 Classroom Checklist. The Part 1 Strategy Counts asks observers to tally the frequency of eight behaviors and a total count is created for each. The Part 2 Rating Scales assess how often teachers used specific instructional and behavioral management strategies (observed rating) and how often teachers should have used those strategies (recommended rating). A discrepancy score is calculated between the observed and recommended ratings, which represents a need for change. Larger scores indicate a greater need for teachers to make changes in their practices and subsequently inform goal identification and progress monitoring in the coaching process. The Part 3 Classroom checklist simply contains a yes-or-no checklist marking the presence or absence of important classroom structural elements. For detailed descriptions of the CSAS scale, forms, and item structures please see Reddy, Fabiano, Dudek, and Hsu (2013a; 2013b) and Reddy, Dudek, Fabiano, and Peters (2015). These investigations have demonstrated the CSAS forms are theoretically and factor analytically derived, and evidence high levels of internal consistency, interrater reliability, and good test-retest reliability, as well predictive validity to student achievement.

**3. Brief and Structured Problem Solving Framework**

The CSC is a brief model based on behavioral consultation frameworks (Bergan & Kratochwill, 1990; Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2008). Each meeting is approximately 30 min long and the meetings follow the sequential process of problem/needs and goal identification, plan development, plan implementation, and evaluation. The brief structure of the CSC model also lends itself for use by school leaders responsible for advancing teachers’ competencies. School administrators and curriculum supervisors, as well as school psychologists, can adopt this brief approach in their work with teachers. Furthermore, the CSC’s formative focus and brief duration enable it to be used as a generalized

Tier 1 professional development approach that can be used anytime during the school year.

Although each meeting has a unique focus, each follows a standard sequential pattern throughout the model: (a) review of data on teachers’ implementation of specific practices, (b) discussions focused on development or review of implementation plans, and (c) planning of coach and teacher actions following the meeting. The CSC model includes the baseline and postintervention phases typically used in behavioral consultation, but goes further by including multiple classroom observations throughout the coaching process. As such, assessments within the CSC are conducted prior to coaching, during the coaching period, and after coaching ends. The structure of four-session model is presented next.

**Session 1.** The first meeting is devoted to identification of specific instructional and behavior management practice needs that will be the focus of coaching. The instructional and behavioral management strategies targeted by the CSC model come directly from CSAS. Specifically, the CSC model focuses on the *Part 1 Strategy Counts* of the CSAS represented in Table 1 (Reddy & Dudek, 2014).

During Session 1, coaches engage in a brief interview about teachers’ current teaching strategies to learn more about their typical practices, current strengths, areas of need, and

**Table 1**  
**Classroom Strategies Assessment System Part 1 Strategy Counts**

<i>Instructional Strategies</i>	<i>Behavior Management Strategies</i>
Concept summaries	Clear 1- to 2-step directives
Academic response opportunities	Vague directives (Reducing)
Academic praise	Behavioral praise
Academic corrective feedback	Behavioral corrective feedback

to establish rapport. Following the interview, coaches describe the underlying theory of the CSAS Part 1 Strategy Counts (see Table 1). Together, coaches and teachers review baseline data on these strategies and select at least one instructional and one behavioral management strategy as goals to focus on during coaching (i.e., a minimum of two strategies). For example, a teacher may choose to work on improving their use of academic response opportunities and clear directives so as to promote greater levels of student engagement and increased follow through when behavioral requests are made by the teacher. Teachers and coaches then develop implementation plans based on their selected goals for use in the second and third meetings. The implementation plans identify which strategies will be targeted during each session and how the teacher will use the strategies while teaching. Following session 1 and prior to session 2, coaches perform at least two classroom observations using the CSAS.

**Sessions 2 and 3.** Sessions 2 and 3 utilize a similar format, except each session primarily focuses on instructional or behavioral management strategy goals, and the respective formative data from the CSAS for each. This helps to optimize use of time during the 30 min coaching meetings. For example, if a teacher selected academic response opportunities and clear directives as their goals, session 2 may focus on academic response opportunities and clear directives would be the focus in session 3. Session 2 begins with a review of CSAS data through visual performance feedback (i.e., graphs) from the first series of coaches' observations. Ways to improve use or effectiveness of practices for the goals targeted in session 2 (i.e., academic responses opportunities in the current example) are discussed and a specific implementation plan developed. Continuing with our example, session 2 visual performance feedback would display graphical data about academic response opportunities and ways to improve the use and effectiveness of this strategy would be discussed. Once the meeting is concluded, coaches conduct another series of classroom observations. session 3 similarly begins

with a presentation CSAS visual performance feedback for the goals targeted in session 2 and then addresses the complimentary area that is the focus of session 3. Thus, by the end of third meeting, teachers continue implementing their plans for both areas (instructional and behavioral). Coaches then conduct a final series of observations after session 3.

**Session 4.** Coaches and teachers review CSAS visual performance feedback on implementation progress for both instructional and behavioral management goals. Memory strategies to promote the acquired or modified strategies are discussed and the coaching intervention is considered complete. Post-coaching observations with the CSAS can be conducted to assess overall outcome.

A hypothetical coaching scenario is presented next to illustrate the use of the CSC model. Mr. Apple is a newly hired fourth grade teacher at ABC Elementary School. During the first session interview with his CSC coach, Mr. Apple shared concerns about low student engagement and inappropriate behavior during his afternoon math lessons. Mr. Apple's coach highlighted several strategies from the CSAS that related to Mr. Apple's concern and ultimately, Mr. Apple decided he would like to improve his use of academic praise and behavioral praise from the CSAS Part 1 Strategy Counts to improve student engagement and proactively reinforce students' behavior. Mr. Apple and his coach then developed a preliminary implementation plan to guide their activities in sessions 2 through 4. For Mr. Apple, this plan first focused on academic praise in session 2 (specifically, the key features and effective use of this strategy). Session 3 was to focus on the same implementation concepts for behavior praise, and session 4 was to evaluate overall progress and discuss plans for sustainability. Following their first meeting, the coach conducted two classroom observations using the CSAS and prepared the data for their next session.

In session 2, Mr. Apple's coach reviewed data from the two classroom observations and connected this information with previous baseline scores. Together, they confirmed that academic praise and behavioral praise would be the focus of

coaching. The coach then engaged Mr. Apple in a discussion about the hallmarks of effective academic praise and modeled several examples of effective praise for Mr. Apple. Together, Mr. Apple and his coach examined his lesson plans for the next few days to identify times where Mr. Apple could focus on implementing this strategy. The coach then scheduled two additional observations coinciding with these times to monitor and provide feedback on Mr. Apple's implementation in the next session. Following their meeting, the coach provided Mr. Apple with a summary of meeting notes and conducted the observations at the scheduled times.

Session 3 started with a review of Mr. Apple's implementation data for academic praise. The coach noticed during the two observations that Mr. Apple has made progress in using this strategy more often. Together, they reviewed his lesson plans for the week and discussed additional ways this strategy could be used. Session 3 then shifted to focus on the implementation of behavior praise. Similar to session 2, the coach reviewed effective behavioral praise and modeled several examples for Mr. Apple. They then engaged in a discussion about how Mr. Apple could implement this practice in his classroom and identified times during the week for him to focus on its use. The meeting concluded with a summary of notes and an additional two observations by the coach.

During session 4, the coach reviewed Mr. Apple's CSAS data for academic praise and behavioral praise. Mr. Apple had made significant progress in using academic praise more often in his classroom and through the CSAS data, both could see that Mr. Apple had started to make progress in using behavioral praise. Mr. Apple noted that he has started seeing greater engagement in his students during question and answer periods when he uses frequent academic praise, and behavioral praise has helped to reinforce appropriate behavior during transitional periods. The coach and Mr. Apple then discussed strategies for how Mr. Apple could maintain effective use of academic praise and behavior praise.

#### **4. Establishment of Measurable Goals**

The formulation of practice goals that are specific, observable, and measurable are key elements to the CSC model. In this model, goals are defined and progress toward them is measured through the use of the CSAS forms, which specifically outline evidence-based instructional and behavioral management strategies that have been found to be effective in promoting student learning. Each of the strategies on the CSAS is explicitly defined, observable, and measurable, as well as prevalent and effective across content areas and grade levels. The coaching process is thus facilitated by coaches and teachers focus on the same well-defined constructs.

#### **5. Provision for Modeling and Practice**

The CSC model uses observational learning and modeling in its coaching sessions to enhance uptake and increase use of the instruction and behavioral management strategies. In the CSC, coaches are trained on the effective teaching literatures that guide the CSAS and its coaching model. Coaches use this knowledge to inform the coaching process and model during sessions how to implement and use these strategies effectively. Coaches provide opportunities for teachers to practice using these strategies, typically in the form of role-playing with teachers or emulating these strategies to teachers.

#### **6. Visual Performance Feedback on Implementation Progress**

All components of the CSAS, specifically the Part 1 Strategy Counts and Part 2 Rating Scales, were designed to create visual representations (i.e., bar graphs or time series graphs; Fabiano, Reddy, & Dudek, under review; Reddy & Dudek 2014) for giving teachers performance feedback about a single observation, as well as visuals for progress monitoring of performance across multiple observations and time. Numerous studies have documented the benefits of visual performance feedback for enhancing teacher practice and the implementation of evidence-

based practice (e.g., Jones, Wickstrom & Friman, 1997; Sutherland, Alder, & Gunter, 2003). Coaches using the CSC model review with teachers time series graphs of the strategies targeted for coaching, which allow teachers to see how the frequency and quality of their strategy use changes over time. A visual performance feedback example from the CSAS is presented in Figure 1, which demonstrates data from the hypothetical classroom of Mr. Apple.

**Emerging Evidence for the CSC Model**

The CSC four-session model has been tested in a randomized controlled trial with 89 participating teachers from the states of New Jersey and New York (Fabiano, Reddy, & Dudek, under review) funded by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES; R305A080337, Reddy PI). Participating teachers were the primary lead teacher in general education classrooms and taught grade levels kindergarten through fifth grade. In this study, participating teachers’ were assigned to two conditions: (a) an immediate coaching [IC] condition that started with the four session model

at the onset of the study and (b) a wait-list control condition (WL) that began the four-session coaching model after a brief 5-week delay. Coaches participating in the study were doctoral students from school psychology programs at the respective research institutions conducting the study as well as the study’s authors.

In accordance with the CSC, teachers’ worked with coaches over the course of four, 30-min sessions for a period of 4 weeks (one session per week). Coaches used the CSAS-O to conduct observations in between sessions, which provided formative observation data for progress monitoring. The specific behavioral targets available for selection in this study were the eight Part 1 Strategy Counts of the CSAS-O Form, although Part 2 Rating Scale data were also monitored. Visual performance feedback of the CSAS data (time-series graphs) was used to facilitate goal setting, plan development, and implementation.

Study outcomes were measured by comparing the post coaching evaluation of the IC condition’s progress on the eight Part 1 Strategy Counts to the teachers’ progress on the same eight strategies in the WL condition, who did not receive any form of CSC coaching. ANCOVA results from the

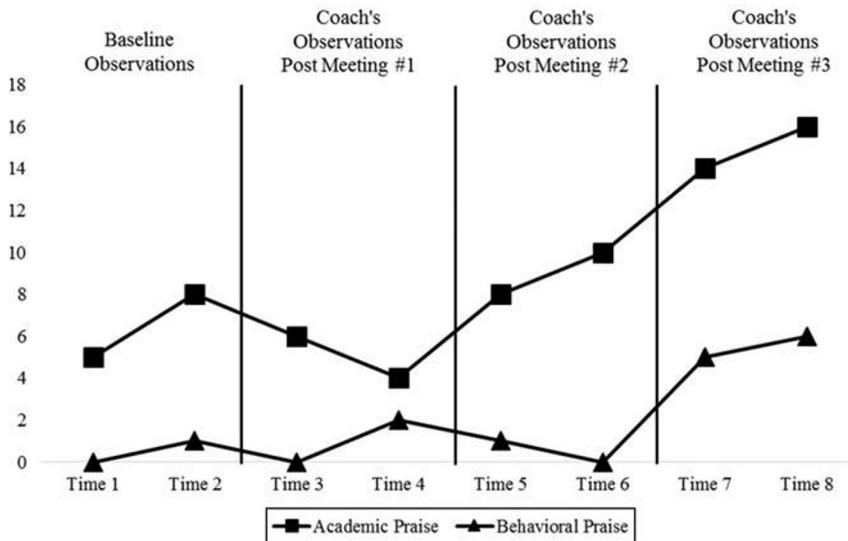


Figure 1. Classroom Strategies Assessment System Visual Performance Feedback for Mr. Apple’s.

comparison showed that relative to the WL control condition, teachers in the IC condition significantly improved their use of the targeted strategies from the eight Part 1 Strategy Counts (effect of .54). Although not directly targeted in the brief CSC intervention, the postcoaching evaluation comparison found a significant reduction in the IC condition teachers' need for change on the Part 2 BMS Rating Scale discrepancy scores (effect size of .54) compared to WL condition. Furthermore, teachers in the IC condition self-reported greater improvements on the CSAS-T at post-test. Specifically, teachers in the IC condition self-reported a decrease in discrepancy scores for the Part 2 IS and Part 2 BMS Rating Scale strategies (effect sizes of .35 and .27 respectively), compared to their WL condition counterparts. Self-reported improvements in the IC condition also were documented on a measure examining teachers' perceptions of intervention success (effect sizes of 1.13 and 1.32 for behavioral management and instructional strategies respectively) compared to the WL condition. Following the completion of the RCT, WL teachers who received CSC yielded similar classroom improvements.

Overall, results from the randomized controlled trial provide initial support for the CSC four-session model as a valid intervention for improving teachers' classroom practices. Teachers receiving IC made significant improvements on their use of the eight Part 1 Strategy Counts that were the focus of the intervention, as well as self-reported improvements in strategy usage. In sum, this study provides emerging evidence for the CSC 4-session as an intervention teachers find effective.

### **Future Directions for Advancing Research and Practice**

Although there is initial promising evidence of the CSC model, more work is necessary to understand how coaching components and processes influence fidelity and outcomes. For example, investigations are needed to further understand how the CSC model can affect

changes in the CSAS Part 2 Strategy Rating Scales, specifically the IS Rating Scale, as well as how the interaction between Part 1 Strategy Counts and Part 2 Strategy Rating Scales can inform the coaching process. In the previous randomized trial, the Part 2 Strategy Rating Scales were not a direct focus of the coaching process due to the practical time constraints of the four-session model. New research should expand upon the four-session CSC model and include as part of the coaching process sessions devoted to identifying, planning, and implementing the Part 2 IS and BMS Rating Scale strategies.

Furthermore, additional research is needed to understand the influence of specific coaching components and interactions of components on increasing and sustaining teacher behaviors (proximal) and student learning and social behavior (distal). Because the four-session CSC randomized controlled study primarily focused on improvements in teacher practices, it remains unclear if CSC coaching will impact both teacher practices and student learning and behavior (currently being investigated in a second randomized controlled study by Reddy, Shernoff and Lekwa). Additionally, it is unknown which sets of instructional and behavioral management strategies yield more favorable student outcomes and how these strategies work together to orchestrate enriched classroom environments for all students including those with disabilities.

### **Conclusion**

Although instructional coaching is emerging as an effective form of enhancing teachers' classroom practices and effectiveness, there are limited tools available for helping coaches gather quantitative data on teachers' classroom practices, specifically instructional and classroom behavior management practices. Preliminary research on the CSC model supports the importance of using formative assessment to inform and guide changes in teachers' classroom practices. The CSC model offers new avenues for research and practice.

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### Additional Resources

1. Reinke, W. M., Stormont, M., Herman, K.C., Wang, Z., Newcomer, L., and King, K. (2014). Use of coaching and behavior support planning for students with disruptive behavior within a universal classroom management program. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, *22*, 74–82.

This article discusses a universal classroom management program designed to work with teacher coaching. Coaches supported teachers in developing and implementing behavioral support plans with students. The program and coaching led to a reduction in teachers' use of reprimands as well as increased on-task and prosocial behaviors from students.

2. Reinke, W.M., Lewis-Palmer, T., & Merrell, K. (2008). The classroom check-up: A classwide teacher consultation model for increasing praise and decreasing disruptive behavior. *School Psychology Review*, *37*, 315–332.

This study focused on implementing and evaluating the effects of a classroom-wide consultation model. The model is titled the Classroom Check-up and aims to enhance

teachers use of effective classroom behavioral management strategies. The results show teachers successfully increased their use of behavioral specific praise while decreasing their use of reprimands, which ultimately led to decreases in disruptive student behaviors.

3. Hagermoser Sanetti, L. M., Luiselli, J. K., & Handler, M. W. (2007). Effects of verbal and graphic performance feedback on behavior support plan implementation in a public elementary school. *Behavior Modification*, *31*, 454–465.

This research article investigated the effectiveness of using visual performance feedback and verbal performance feedback together to help the members of a second grade teaching team implement a student-specific behavioral support plan. The researchers utilized a novel design that first utilized verbal feedback only and then introduced visual performance feedback. Results highlight the effectiveness of performance feedback in general, and demonstrate the combination of verbal and visual performance feedback is more effective than verbal feedback alone.

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