

Bridging the Gap: Using the Brief Student–Teacher Classroom Interaction Observation to Inform Classroom Practices

Assessment for Effective Intervention
2016, Vol. 42(1) 43–45
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DOI: 10.1177/1534508416667309
aei.sagepub.com



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Abstract

The brief Student–Teacher Classroom Interaction Observation (ST-CIO) is a direct observation assessment that evaluates interactions between teachers and students. The measure was developed for use in classrooms during academic instruction to determine the frequency of teacher use of reprimands and praise toward a student, as well as the frequency of a student disruptive behavior. This article summarizes the purpose, procedures, and evidence base currently available in the literature to support the ST-CIO and offers ideas for how this observation system can be used to improve classroom practices.

Keywords

diversity, emotional/behavioral disorders, observation

Assessment of Focus

Brief Student–Teacher Classroom Interaction Observation (ST-CIO).

Setting	Target populations	Grade level
Classroom	Individual students	Validated in grades kindergarten through 3

Purpose

The *Student–Teacher Classroom Interaction Observation* (ST-CIO) is a 5-min observation developed to quickly assess teacher interactions with students during classroom instruction. The measure was designed to allow a snapshot of the amount of praise versus reprimands a student receives from a teacher within a very short time frame. In addition, the ST-CIO simultaneously gathers data on student disruptive and aggressive behavior. Together these data can provide important information about how the student behaves in the classroom and how the teacher interacts with that student with regard to the use of positive and negative feedback. The reciprocal nature of teacher and student interactions and associated outcomes lends itself to considering interventions that target both teacher and student behavior.

Brief Description and Procedures

The ST-CIO is a direct observation measure that is conducted in the classroom setting with a focus on one student at a time.

Duration

For 5 min, the frequency of teacher use of behavior specific praise, general praise, explicit reprimands, and harsh reprimands directed toward the individual student being observed is tallied (see operational definitions in Table 1). In addition, the frequencies of student disruptive and aggressive behaviors of the observed individual student are gathered at the same time. Each student is observed for 5 min during academic instruction times. Figure 1 provides an example of a simple paper and pencil format that could be used to gather these data on multiple students in the same classrooms.

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Table 1. ST-CIO Operational Definitions.

Behavior	Observational definition
General praise	Verbal statement or gestures that indicate approval and do not name a specific behavior.
Behavior specific praise	Verbal statement that indicates approval and names a specific behavior.
Explicit reprimand	Verbal comments or gestures by teacher to indicate disapproval of behavior; reprimand is concise (brief) in a normal speaking tone.
Harsh reprimand	Verbal comments or gestures indicate disapproval of behavior using a voice louder than typical for setting or harsh, critical or sarcastic tone. In addition, any prolonged discussion about behavior with students (30 s or longer) is coded as a Harsh reprimand.
Student disruptive behavior	Student displays a behavior that violated the classroom expectations which interferes with instruction. Typically the teacher must reprimand the behavior for it to be considered disruptive. However, a target student can receive a disruption if they interfere with the learning of a peer.
Student aggressive behavior	Student is physically or verbally aggressive toward objects, peer(s), or teacher.

Note. ST-CIO = Student–Teacher Classroom Interaction Observation.

Teacher: Ms. Newcomer		Date: 10/28/2016		Activity: Literacy		
Student #	Teacher General Praise	Teacher Behavior Specific Praise	Teacher Explicit Reprimand	Teacher Harsh Reprimand	Student Disruption	Student Aggression
Start- End Time:						
Student 1 (Sarah)				0		0
9:12am- 9:17am						
Student 2: (Erica)	0			0		
9:20-9:25am						
Student 3: (Kennedy)	0	0	0	0	0	0
9:25-9:30am						
Student 4: (Chris)	0	0				0
9:32-9:37am						

Figure 1. Example data collection form for gathering ST-CIO data on multiple students.

Note. ST-CIO = Student–Teacher Classroom Interaction Observation.

When conducting the observation, a simple paper and pencil tally form can be constructed. See additional resources below for other tally forms and information on gathering direct observation data in classrooms.

Data Conversion

Following completion of the observation, data can be converted to rate per minute. To determine the amount of positive to negative interactions the individual student received from the classroom teacher, the total number of reprimands

(explicit + harsh) are subtracted from the total number of praise statement (behavior specific + general). Thus, students receiving more positive than negative attention have a positive score on this variable and those receiving more negative than positive attention have a negative score.

Research Finding and Implications for Practice

Research indicates that the ST-CIO is a valid measure (Reinke, Herman, & Newcomer, 2016). Findings demonstrated that

students who received more positive than negative attention at the start of the school year were rated as having higher levels of prosocial behavior at the end of the school year. Furthermore, students receiving more negative attention demonstrated increase in disruptive behavior at the end of the year. In addition, teachers were found to provide more negative attention to boys than girls and African American children than White children. These findings have implications for changing classroom practices.

Who Can Use This Tool?

The ST-CIO could be used by anyone in a supportive role with the teacher. Teachers may not be aware that they are interacting more negatively with particular students. The ST-CIO offers a tool for school psychologists, administrators, or even peer teachers to observe and take notice of the day-to-day interaction in a classroom. The observer might identify a student with challenging behaviors, a girl, a boy, and a student from a diverse background to see how the teacher interacts with each student. This information could then be provided back to the teacher in a manner that supports the teacher in being more aware of their positive to negative interactions with students in the classroom. The teacher could identify students he or she finds difficult to praise and develop strategies to change this over time. For instance, the teacher could set a specific goal to praise the student 4 times for every time they provide a reprimand.

Overall the ST-CIO is an unobtrusive feasible brief assessment that can be readily used to support teachers in improving their interactions with all students in their classroom. In addition, the observation can provide feedback to teachers, which can lead to use of new strategies to increase praise to particular students and/or development

of behavioral supports for students exhibiting high levels of disruptive behaviors, with an eye toward improving interactions between teacher and student.

Authors' Note

The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not represent views of the Institute or the U.S. Department of Education.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: The research reported here was supported by the Institute of Educational Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, through Grant R305A100342 to the first and second author.

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Resources

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