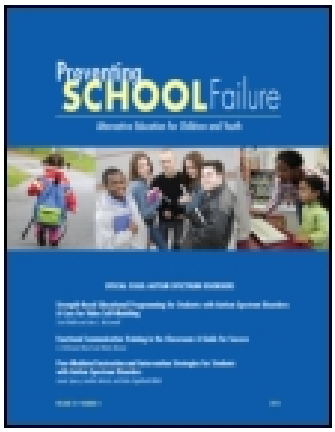

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The Classwide Function-Based Intervention Team Program

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The Classwide Function-Based Intervention Team Program

Howard P. Wills, Debra Kamps, Blake Hansen, Carl Conklin, Skylar Bellinger, Jeaveen Neaderhiser, and Belinda Nsubuga

ABSTRACT: The authors present an overview of how to implement the classwide function-based intervention team (CW-FIT) program. The CW-FIT program is a multilevel group contingency intervention that broadly addresses common functions of problem behavior. The CW-FIT is considered a classroom-level primary intervention because it is used with all students in a class. For students not responding to the primary-level intervention-group contingency, secondary-level or targeted interventions of self-management and help-card procedures are implemented. Students that do not respond to either primary or secondary intervention are candidates for a functional behavior assessment (tertiary level). The authors focus on describing the primary and secondary levels of CW-FIT. Results show that this intervention increases classwide time on on-task behavior during instruction and reduces disruptive behavior of students who are at risk for school failure.

KEYWORDS: *behavior, classroom-level intervention, group contingency, reward, self-management*

URBAN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS and teachers are under pressure to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP; Walker, Ramsey, & Gresham, 2004) and accelerate student learning to meet the challenge of the 2014 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB; 2001) NCLB proficiency requirements. These teachers often face challenges of how to meet such goals given the entry-level skills of their students and the complexities of managing various individual academic and behavioral needs (McCurdy, Mannella, & Eldridge, 2003). In most schools, intervention teams (e.g., student-improvement teams or support teams) assist teachers and increase student learning. However, in urban schools, these teams are frequently overburdened and many urban schoolteachers need evidence-based interventions and strategies that support a wide range of behavior problems.

In urban schools, students who are at risk for serious behavior disorders (SBD) have an alarming risk of failure, and national trends show an increasing prevalence of risk (Walker et al., 2004). Despite early indicators that predict later failure due to academic, behavior or both academic and behavior problems (Campbell, 1994; Kamps, Ellis, Mancina, Wyble, & Greene, 1995; Kamps, Tankersley, & Ellis, 2000; Patterson, Reid, & Dishion, 1992; Webster-Stratton, Reid, & Hammond, 2001) students with SBD are not identified until they have exhibited serious problems over multiple school years (Duncan, Forness, & Hartsough, 1995). An estimated 3–6% of school-aged children have SBD (Kauffman, 2001), with more boys than girls meeting criteria (Walker, Severson, Feil, Stiller, & Golly, 1998).

Unfortunately, increases in student risk and resulting challenging behaviors have led to an increased use of punitive and reactionary tactics in schools (e.g., extensive time-outs, office referrals, suspensions, and expulsions). Research indicates that zero tolerance and exclusionary practices are ineffective because they (a) remove the student from educational opportunity, greatly diminishing academic gains, (b) do not improve the behavior of students, but only result in a change of setting—from schools to communities—and (c) may actually accelerate behavior problems because of increased free time and access to antisocial peers (Sugai & Horner, 2002). Fortunately, highly effective and practical intervention procedures that address behavior challenges are available (e.g., Kamps et al., 2000; Stage & Quiroz, 1997).

A meta-analysis of effective interventions that decrease disruptive behaviors reported strong outcomes from the use of group contingencies, self-management, differential

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reinforcement, and functional assessment (Stage & Quiroz, 1997). Other highly effective interventions for reducing risks of SBD include direct instruction for functional communication, social skills, and consultant-based one-to-one interventions (Bessette & Wills, 2007; Golly, Stiller, & Walker, 1998; Nelson, Crabtree, Marchand-Martella, & Martella, 1998). Further, group-contingency programs such as the Good Behavior Game (see Embry, 2002; Tankersly, 1995) that use reinforcement for appropriate rule following and mild, consistent consequences for infractions are especially effective with high-risk students in the context of peer groups in general education settings.

The purpose of this article was to describe the classwide function-based intervention team (CW-FIT) program. The CW-FIT program is a multilevel group-contingency intervention. For students not responding to the primary-level group contingency, a secondary level (or targeted) intervention is used. Students who fail to respond at the primary and secondary levels are candidates for the third level of intervention, which includes conducting functional behavior assessments. This article focuses on describing the primary and secondary levels of CW-FIT.

The CW-FIT program addresses the most common functions of severe problem behavior that (a) account for the primary social factors known to contribute to the severe problem behavior in schools, and (b) serve as a proactive approach in keeping with positive behavioral support intended to enable children's school success in school by addressing alterable contingencies at group and individual levels. On the basis of years of empirical support (Stage & Quiroz, 1997), there are four CW-FIT components.

Components of CW-FIT

Teaching

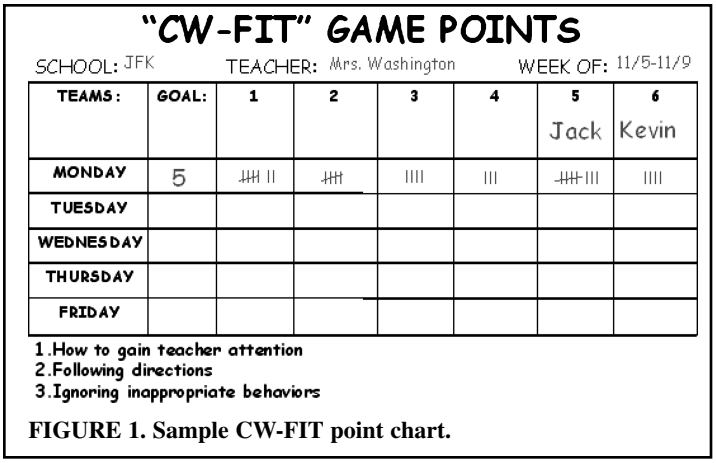
The teaching component involves clearly defining and teaching desirable communication skills to assist the student in obtaining attention from teacher and peers, gaining access to activities, and appropriately escaping demands (Northup et al., 1995). All students are taught three primary skills: how to get the teacher's attention, following directions, and ignoring inappropriate behavior. This framework covers a broad range of behavioral functions. Beyond the primary-level group-contingency teaching skills, educators can teach students to gain attention appropriately, recruit reinforcement, request escape (i.e., breaks), request assistance when tasks are too difficult (i.e., "help" cards), or to gain access to tangibles or privileges.

Extinction

The extinction component entails eliminating or minimizing potential social reinforcement for problem behavior (e.g., Zarcone, Iwata, Mazaleski, & Smith, 1994). Teaching and reinforcing appropriate behaviors (teaching component) while systematically eliminating reinforcement for the inappropriate behavior enables students to learn a new repertoire of socially desirable behaviors. Using the CW-FIT program, teachers recognize and reward students for appropriately recruiting their attention (e.g. raising their hand to ask a question) while minimizing or withholding attention to students for inappropriate recruitment (e.g., calling out). Students in the program reinforce each others' appropriate behavior with attention and help, and they are rewarded for minimizing or ignoring attention to peers for inappropriate or problem behavior.

Reward

The reward component is composed of group and individual contingencies. Students earn points for their teams by engaging in desired behaviors (e.g., being on task, gaining attention appropriately, following instructions, ignoring inappropriate behavior). A chart posted in the classroom displays a list of the skills and each team's points (see Figure 1). Smaller groups and individual students (targets or peers) may also earn points for engaging in specific behaviors. These


"CW-FIT" GAME POINTS

SCHOOL: JFK TEACHER: Mrs. Washington WEEK OF: 11/5-11/9

TEAMS:	GOAL:	1	2	3	4	5 Jack	6 Kevin
MONDAY	5	𝍸 II	𝍸	IIII	III	𝍸 III	IIII
TUESDAY							
WEDNESDAY							
THURSDAY							
FRIDAY							

1.How to gain teacher attention
2.Following directions
3.Ignoring inappropriate behaviors

FIGURE 1. Sample CW-FIT point chart.

students can then earn agreed-upon activities, privileges, or small tangible items.

Self-Management or Peer Management

This secondary-level component includes teaching self-management strategies to students at the greatest risk for school failure. Teaching self-management strategies can be achieved (a) to individualize support for students who do not respond to the primary components of CW-FIT and (b) to promote maintenance and generalization of intervention gains (McQuillan, DuPaul, Shapiro, & Cole, 1996; Shapiro & Cole, 1994). This intervention component includes a minichart that matches the class point chart posted in the class. This individual chart is placed on the desk for each of the target students and two or three peers. Educators may also give students the option of requesting brief peer tutoring.

Intervention Procedures

CW-FIT Coaches' Role

Using systematic training and support, school psychologists, instructional coaches, paraprofessionals, behavior specialists, and a variety of other personnel can serve as coaches. A coach should effectively support between five and eight classrooms for 15–20 hr per week during initial start-up effort and 10–20 hr per week thereafter.

The CW-FIT coaches assist teachers in implementing CW-FIT through the following process:

Step 1. Screen for SBD risks across all classes.
Step 2. Coordinate communication with parents for any necessary informed consent or collaboration with other school support systems (e.g., behavior intervention plan, individualized education plan, student support teams).
Step 3. Facilitate a preintervention preparation including a planning meeting with participating teachers.
Step 4. Train teachers.
Step 5. Collect baseline data.
Step 6. Implement the intervention with ongoing data collection and monitor students' and teachers' performance.
Step 7. Continue to monitor, coach, and support.

Data to Support Decision Making

Coaches use a variety of methods of ongoing data collection and monitoring to guide implementation of CW-FIT and document change. At the primary level, a measure of classwide students who are on task and an intervention fidelity rating are used. *Group on task* (see Veerkamp, Kamps & Cooper, 2007) is a 20-min observation procedure that provides a classwide measure of on-task behaviors. Every 30 s, an observer scans teams (three to six teams that the teacher has established) and marks whether any individual student is off task, per team. At the end of the interval observation, the coach can determine a percentage of on-task intervals per team, and the total can be averaged to determine the percentage that the whole class is on task.

To guide implementation of individual student supports, coaches follow a screening protocol such as the Systematic Screening for Behavior Disorders (SSBD; Walker & Severson, 1992) or the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS; Gresham & Elliott, 1990). Coaches directly observe students with the greatest risk to document effects of the CW-FIT primary-level intervention and guide the implementation of other levels of support, if necessary. Coaches can also monitor intervention effects with office referrals, support team referrals, or special education referrals.

Preintervention Preparation

Overview

The coach provides an overview of the CW-FIT and recruits classroom teachers to participate. It is necessary that teachers volunteer or indicate a willingness to participate. Past implementation experiences have indicated that the teachers who perfer not participate often fail to implement with high fidelity. In addition, the focus of a coach's time is more productively spent working with willing participants so that students receive the maximum benefits of the intervention.

Classrooms that may benefit from this intervention generally have an overall classroom percentage of on-task behavior of less than 80% (on the basis of observations of group on task). In addition, more than one student in the class should be nominated and meet early screening for behavior risk. If the classwide on-task is greater than 80% or if only one student has behavior risk then it may be more efficient to focus efforts more directly on a particular student with a targeted or individualized intervention.

Interview

To begin the process, the coach briefly interviews the teachers to determine the most problematic times of the academic day. Teachers should conduct interventions during this identified time of day (30–60 min). During the interview, on the basis of the needs of individual classrooms, coaches determine whether additional skills need to be taught (see three primary skills under the *Teaching* section of this article). They also determine whether any modifications of the lessons (to introduce and teach the skills), or skill posters need to be made to contextualize the intervention for the individual classrooms. Skills and posters can also be modified to incorporate language that is used as part of a schoolwide system such as schoolwide positive behavior supports (Horner & Sugai, 2000). After addressing skills, the teacher and coach work together to assign students to teams. A classroom of 22 students could be divided into

about five teams. In general, no more than six teams should be formed, because it may be difficult to manage more than that. Team members must be in close proximity, by rows or tables. On occasion, teachers find the need to rearrange seating before starting the intervention, but often group students by the rows or tables in which they are already seated. One common occasion for rearranging seats is to assure that no more than one student with persistent problem behaviors is on a team. When teams are formed, the coach should be able to come in during the intervention period and easily identify the separate teams. To accommodate this, when teachers have students transition to work in groups or on the floor, the teacher can assign teams to rows, sections, or clusters.

Reinforcement Menu

The teacher is provided a list of potential rewards to be used during the intervention. The teacher and coach brainstorm with students to create a list of potential reinforcers—which should be inexpensive or free—and should allow for a quick return to instruction. When brainstorming with the class, if a larger or more expensive reward such as a pizza party is suggested, a teacher may allow it to be on the list but inform the students that they would have to meet goals over an extended period to obtain such a large reward. It is important that students are excited about what they are working toward (which may change day to day), and that if costs are incurred, there is sufficient funding to sustain it throughout the year. (See Table 1 for examples of activity-based and tangible rewards that teachers have used in their elementary classrooms.)

Material Preparation

Teachers need a timer that can easily be set and reset and that beeps loudly enough to be heard across a room. Teachers also need point charts (see Figure 1) and skill posters.

Intervention Start-Up

Introducing Skills

As previously stated, the three primary skills include how to get the teacher's attention, following directions, and ignoring inappropriate behavior. With each skill's introduction, a skill poster is placed in a location visible to the entire class. Each skill poster details four or five simple steps with picture cues. For example, the following steps are listed on the poster for how to get teacher's attention:

Step 1. Look at the teacher

Step 2. Raise your hand.

Step 3. Wait for the teacher to call on you.

Step 4. Ask your question or give an answer.

Each of the lessons to introduce and teach the skills is outlined in a plan that includes the following key components: reviewing the skill poster, modeling examples and nonexamples, student practice, and feedback. Teachers teach the lessons lasting approximately 10–15 min each for a total of 30–45 min for all three lessons. Each new skill should be introduced with a lesson and then practiced and focused on for a few days prior to teaching additional skills. Coaches often model skill instruction by introducing the first skill in a teacher's class. Coaches are then present for at least the first skill the teachers introduce themselves. Coaches model, provide feedback, and offer support to teachers as needed. When all lessons have been introduced, teachers use brief reminders of what the skills are before each daily intervention period.

Start of Each Intervention Period

The teacher begins the period with a brief precorrection or reminder of the skills previously introduced. The teacher uses the posters as a reference and announces the goal for

TABLE 1. Examples of Rewards

Activity-based	Tangible
Brief time to talk with friends	Toys
Play with puzzles or games in the classroom	Candy, chips or crackers
Eat lunch in the classroom	Pencils
Play preferred math game	Erasers
Free time with a variety of games and activities	Stickers
Dance time in the classroom	Positive call home
Computer time	Visit from Principal who raves about success
Classical music during writing time	Raffle tickets for a chance to win a prize
Reading time with shoes off	Tickets exchangeable for "perks" such as sitting in the teacher's chair for specific time
Short game such as Seven Up	10 min chewing gum time
Drawing with favorite markers	
Bonus point on next spelling test or homework	
Sing favorite action song	

the day and the reward. This process should generally take less than 1 min.

Intervention Period

Throughout the intervention period the teacher leads instruction as usual, but briefly pauses to praise and award points when his or her timer beeps. The timer should initially be set for every 2–3 min and gradually increased to every 5–8 min. For example, a teacher may say, "Group 1, you're doing a great job following directions. Group 2 has remembered to raise their hands, and Group 3, remember next time to ignore inappropriate behavior." The team that receives the reminder will not receive the point. Points are rewarded to teams as a whole and require all members of the team to apply skills appropriately, including following the directions that have been given and being on task. Coaches assist teachers in setting initial intervals for the timer and reasonable goals. At the end of the period, the teacher counts the points and all teams that met the goal receive the reward, which, if at all possible, should be delivered immediately.

Intervention Maintenance

After a couple months of intervention, components of the intervention can gradually be faded and rewards thinned in a variety of ways including the following: conducting the intervention fewer number of times per day or fewer days per week, using longer point intervals (or lower goals), establishing cumulative days of goal attainment to receive rewards, and shifting from tangible or activity-based reinforcers to social reinforcers. Determining how and when to fade or thin should be based on how well the students are doing (i.e., if possible, using data on the group time on task) not simply the passage of time. Teachers may find the need to strengthen or reinstate the intervention prior to predictable problem times such as leading up to or returning from winter break, spring break, or a stressful environment such as assessments.

Self-Management and Help Cards

Using data (e.g., group time on task and fidelity) for decision making, the coach and teacher determine whether the intervention is being implemented with fidelity and whether the overall on-task percentage for the class is approximately 80% or higher. If these markers of good implementation are evident, and there are still individual students needing support (based on frequency of disruptions or low individual student on-task percentages), then the coach can assist with a secondary or targeted intervention of self-management or help cards.

Self-Management

In CW-FIT classrooms, self-management can be used with a variety of students not responding to the primary intervention. The school coach takes aside the students who are selected for self-management and trains them to use the procedure. This is done in a small group with the coach providing mini–point sheets that have the same skills on them as the class point sheet. The students put their name on the point sheet, and each student is considered as a group of his or her own. During the CW-FIT intervention period, when the timer sounds, the teacher awards class points to the teams and states that those doing self-management should give themselves a point or not according to how well they consider they are modeling the CW-FIT skills.

Help Cards

In CW-FIT classes, help cards are often used for students whose problem behaviors or disengagement appear to be maintained by avoiding academic demands or who seek teacher or peer help with difficult work. The school coach takes aside the students who need help cards and trains them to use the procedure. The cards are $3'' \times 5''$ brightly-colored card stock and typically have the word *HELP* typed on them. Students are taught to use a help card when having academic difficulty as a replacement to such things as giving up or calling out. A student simply offers the card to the teacher. Teachers are instructed to respond immediately when beginning a help-card intervention, so that the student quickly learns that the cards gain access to attention or escape from the task much more quickly than the problem or inappropriate behavior. Peers have also been taught how to receive help cards and to offer brief assistance without doing the work for the student requesting help. When help cards are used, the number of cards is systematically decreased over the course of several sessions so that the student learns to discriminate when he or she really needs assistance or to otherwise try to solve problems before asking for help. When possible, teachers have made academic accommodations to match the level of material to the student's ability as a recommended strategy for decreasing the likelihood of students avoiding, or needing help with, difficult work. Academic accommodations are at times not easy to facilitate, so teachers have used help cards with and without such accommodations.

Supportive Evidence

Data from more than 35 classrooms and more than 700 students showed promising results that include decreased disruptive behaviors, increased on-task behavior during CW-FIT over baseline, and increased teacher attention to appropriate behaviors. For three urban elementary schools (of which 79–95% were minorities and 80–95% were economically disadvantaged) classwide time on task in 16 participating classes improved from baselines of 67%, 52%, and 57% to 83%, 78%, and 80% respectively. These gains directly led to increased instruction time for these

students in urban classrooms. Figure 2 provides an example of improvements in classwide on-task for one of the fourth-grade classes. For this class, the intervention was briefly removed and then reinstated to demonstrate the relationship between the intervention and the gains made.

From these three schools (16 classes) a sample of 25 minority students who were at risk for or have SBD were directly observed before and during the CW-FIT intervention. These kindergarten through fifth-grade students were nominated by their teachers at the beginning of the year and met screening criteria on the SSBD (Walker & Severson, 1992) and had signed consent. These students were of particular interest to the teachers and principals on the basis of the pressure to improve performance in accordance with AYP. Figure 3 shows a nearly 50% reduction of disruptive behaviors during 15 min direct observation sessions of these students. Figure 4 shows the increase in percentage of time on task for these students, which was greater than 10%. These results demonstrate the effects of a strong primary intervention and targeted efforts prior to more costly efforts to develop function-based intervention plans.

Teacher feedback regarding the intervention has been positive. Overall, teachers and students found the intervention beneficial and even fun. Several teachers and their students began referring to the intervention as the *CW-FIT* game. In an end-of-year teacher satisfaction survey, 17 of 19 teachers reported that they enjoyed the CW-FIT intervention. The following are a few comments made on the teacher satisfaction surveys when asked what changes the teachers saw when they implemented CW-FIT:

> "I am more aware of how beneficial it is to praise rather than reprimand."

> "Students are working much better in groups. Students are using positive 'talk' for encouragement."

> "Students are more positive about working with group members they may not be friends with. They also have a better grasp of expectations."

> "When I use the game I have more time to teach rather than deal with inappropriate behavior. The time stopping to award points is well spent."

For most teachers, using CW-FIT helps them stay more positive and protects teaching time by increasing engagement, decreasing disruptions, and avoiding reactive or punitive strategies that can result in students being referred to the office or otherwise losing instructional time.

Student feedback has also been positive. On surveys conducted with 357 kindergarten through fifth-grade students, 85% reported that they liked playing the game. When asked what the students liked about CW-FIT, students often reported the following: "having more fun during academic time," "the teacher being more positive," "being able to get more done," and "working as a team to earn rewards. When asked how CW-FIT could be improved, students often reported, "by getting better rewards and by being able to do it more often." A couple students reported not liking being on a team and one student questioned the fairness of his or her teacher, yet overall, students reported liking and benefiting from the program. In addition, one fifth-grade student who had been nominated by her teacher for behavior problems wrote, "Thank you CW-FIT game for helping me to do good and to do better."

The CW-FIT program is a multilevel intervention that effectively addresses the wide range of behavior problems with which teachers in urban schools are confronted. The

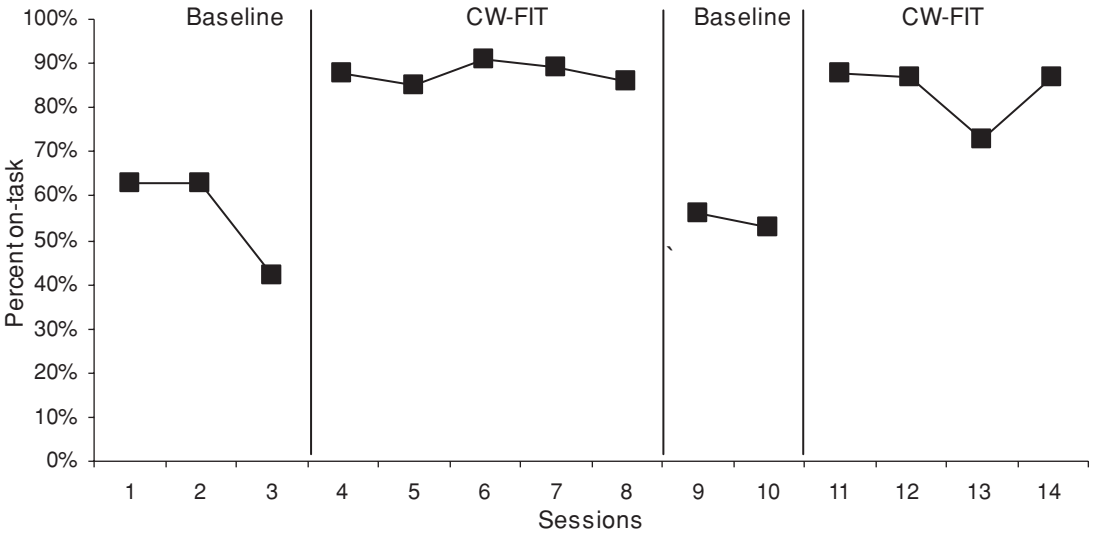


FIGURE 2. Percent of time on-task for one urban forth-grade classroom.

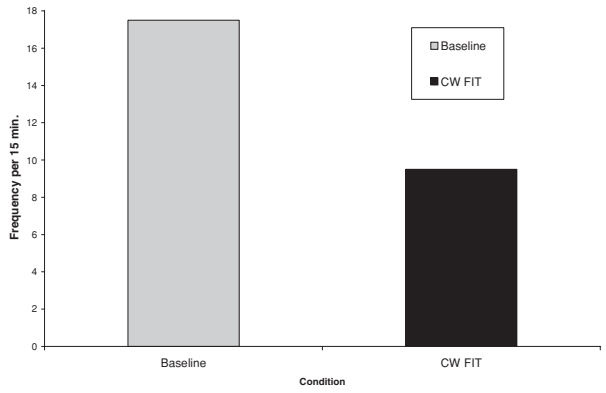


FIGURE 3. Frequency of disruptive behaviors before and during CW-FIT.

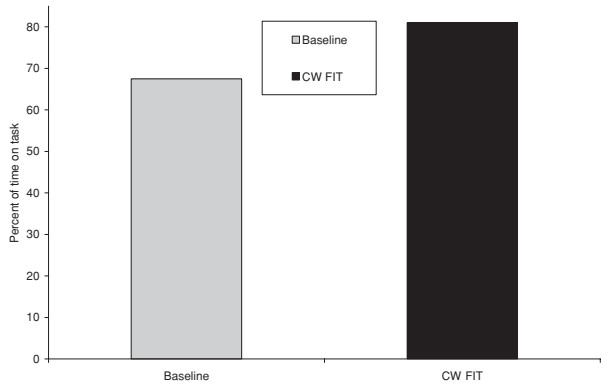


FIGURE 4. Percentage of time on-task before and during CW-FIT.

strategies and components of this program build on a history of well-documented evidence-based strategies (Stage & Quiroz, 1997), including group contingencies (Tankersley, 1995; Embry, 2002) and self-management (Hoff & DuPaul, 1998; Shapiro & Cole, 1994), to increase classwide time on task and reduce disruptive behavior of students. Many teachers and their students have realized these positive outcomes and have reported that the CW-FIT intervention has increased learning time in their classrooms. One urban elementary school teacher enthusiastically asserted that when she began implementing the program during mathematics, "This was the first full math lesson I've been able to make it through!"

AUTHOR NOTES

Howard P. Wills is an assistant research professor and **Debra Kamps** is a senior scientist at Juniper Gardens Child's Project at the University of Kansas. **Blake Hansen**, **Carl Conklin**, **Skylar Bellinger**, **Jeaveen Neaderhiser**, and **Belinda Nsubuga** are developing and researching school-based academic and behavioral interventions at Juniper Gardens Children's Project, University of Kansas.

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