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# DIRECT BEHAVIOR RATING (DBR): AN OVERVIEW FOR SCHOOL- BASED INTERVENTION TEAMS

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## What is a Direct Behavior Rating (DBR)?

Direct Behavior Rating (DBR) refers to the rating of one or more specified behavior(s) at least daily and the sharing of that information with someone other than the rater. For example, a teacher might use a DBR form to rate how well Johnny paid attention in math class. Then, the teacher might share that rating with Johnny and, as part of an intervention, link a consequence (e.g., a sticker) to that rating. DBR tools have a long history of use as a component of behavior support plans (e.g., self-management, behavior contracts) and are also used to collect information about behavior change over time (e.g., monitoring effects of medication for Attention-Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder). Other common terms for DBR tools have included home-school note, good behavior note, behavior report card, etc.

## Why should school-based intervention teams use DBR?

DBR can be appealing from a communication standpoint as the ratings can provide a simple, inexpensive, and flexible method of providing frequent feedback about behavior among students, parents, and teachers. Another appealing aspect of DBR is that use requires only minor change to existing classroom practices. DBR form completion time has been estimated to be between **10 seconds and slightly less than 1 minute per student**, depending on the number of behaviors being rated. Thus, DBR data can provide a quick assessment of relevant behaviors, especially those not easily captured by other means.

Another reason for the appeal of DBR relates to the connection between data collection and intervention – DBR may serve both purposes! When used to communicate information about student behavior across settings, the home environment can offer an opportune setting to increase the number of potential contingencies and promote generalization of school-based intervention efforts. For example, parents may choose to provide reinforcers (e.g., movie, family outing) depending on if rating goals were met. Additionally, DBR can help increase communication between teachers and students, offering an opportunity to teach expected behavior and even have students participate in independent rating (e.g., self-monitoring). In summary, DBR offers opportunities for use in purposes related to assessment, communication, and/or intervention.

## Why is data collection important & what can the intervention team do with the data?

Given that intervention effectiveness can be difficult to predict, we need ongoing sources of data to inform us about progress toward intended goals. DBR offers the potential for collecting “quick” data across a wide variety of cases. Obtained data can then be quantified and compared for both summative (pre/post) and formative (on-going) assessment purposes. For example, DBR data of Susie’s disruptive behavior over the past

## Potential Benefits of Using DBR:

- Increases communication about behavior among teachers, parents, and students
- Provides “quick” way to assess student behavior
- Repeated assessments can be used to monitor behavior change over time
- Demonstrated effectiveness as part of an intervention package
- Efficient given “dual” use in both assessment and intervention purposes

week can be summarized into a statement of her average rating (e.g., 6 out of 10 points) or can be used to determine the most likely period of high or low disruption if multiple ratings per day are taken (e.g., just before lunch). Data are summarized relevant to the DBR scale used to rate behavior. For example, rating information might be plotted on a line graph, with the gradients along the y-axis showing the DBR scale (e.g., 0-10) and observation period on the x-axis (e.g., Monday, Tuesday, etc.).

**How can an intervention team implement use of DBR in their school?**

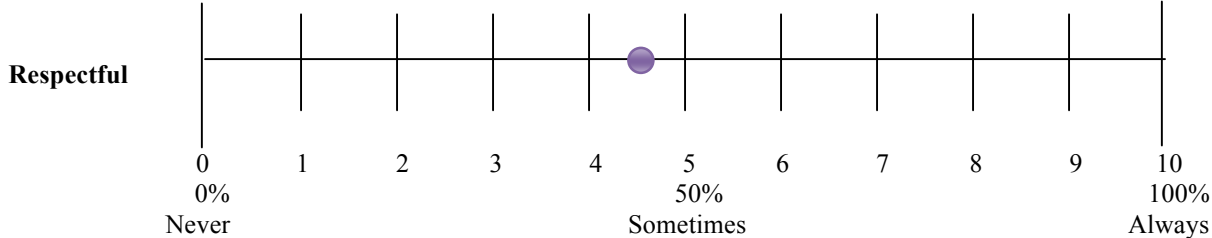
First, establish the procedures for using DBR.

**Step 1:** Begin by presenting a brief introduction to teachers regarding steps to use the DBR (see PowerPoint presentation under Assessment at [www.directbehaviorratings.org](http://www.directbehaviorratings.org)):

- A. Have teachers complete the top of the DBR form (e.g., Date, Student, Day of Week).
- B. Define the observation rating period (e.g., 9:00am – 9:45am) and activity (e.g., independent work).
- C. Examine the behavior definitions and determine whether an additional behavior is desired (e.g., tantrums).
- D. Review the procedures for completing the DBR (e.g., rate immediately following the observation period, do not rate if you did not sufficiently observe the student).

**Step 2:** Have teachers practice conducting the ratings. Monitor and provide feedback to ensure consistency. A training module for using DBR to assess student behavior is available at <http://dbrtraining.uconn.edu/>.

**Example 1:** Mrs. Smith is estimating the *percentage* of time that Emily displayed respectful behavior during math (10-10:44am).



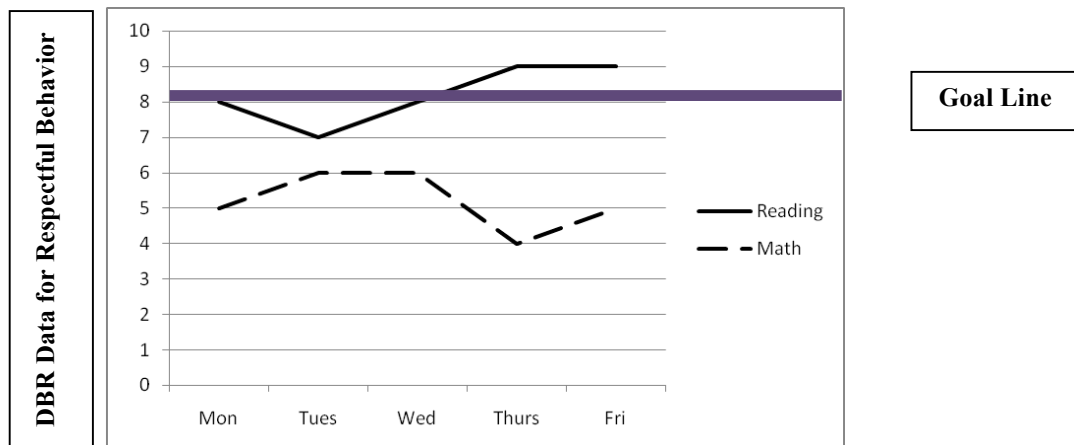
In this example, Emily displayed respectful behavior during 45% of the total observation period.

Next, determine procedures for interpreting DBR data.

**Step 3:** Establish how and who will summarize the data.

**Step 4:** Determine a process for consistent data review, including decisions regarding when to consider implementing or modifying behavior supports.

**Example 2:** The school-based intervention team meets to review Emily’s DBR data in comparison to the expected goal.



Based on the weekly review, the team decided to increase behavior supports for Emily during Math class.