

Transcript: Direct Behavior Rating Overview

Slide 1 (Daniel Maggin) - Hello everyone, this is Daniel Maggin at the University of Illinois-Chicago, and this is a brief overview and a refresher on how to use the Direct Behavior Rating to monitor student progress. As you might recall, the National Center on Intensive Intervention has adopted the DBR as the framework to collect data on student behavior to make decisions about whether an intervention is working or not. The purpose of today's presentation is to provide a reminder on how this data is to be used and collected within the context of monitoring student progress. So without further ado, let's take look at today's goals.

Slide 2 - So today's presentation has three goals. The first is to provide an overview of DBR, and with that, some general considerations of what information is needed to start creating a DBR form. The second goal is to provide a 'nuts and bolts' account of how to complete the DBR form once you've identified the behaviors that are going to be targeted and to find those behaviors and anchor the points on the scale to make sure that you're collecting data reliably and consistently. The final goal of today's presentation is to provide a brief overview of how that information is then used to evaluate student progress. Each of these elements are going to be discussed in the following slides.

Slide 3 - The initial consideration for using a DBR is to select a target behavior. This means that school personnel must determine which behaviors are the most important to remediate. Having a clear idea of which behaviors to change allows for more targeted data collection methods and subsequent intervention procedures. Of course, students with intense behaviors often have several that are of great concern. So the job of teachers and support staff is to sift through the available information, such as anecdotal reports, office discipline referrals, behavior checklists, to determine which behaviors are to be prioritized. The goal here is to focus on only a couple or few behaviors rather than several, which will increase the potency of the intervention. Once a target behavior has been identified, it is necessary to define the behavior clearly, so that all concerned individuals can agree on its occurrence and non-occurrence. These definitions will increase the consistency with which the DBR is applied, and therefore the accuracy and meaningfulness of the data on which programming decisions will subsequently be made.

Slide 4 - After the target behavior has been identified and defined, school personnel must consider several other issues for successful use of DBR. These include determining how often the data are going to be collected, who's going to collect the data, what context are going to be the focus, at what times are the data going to be collected, and when will the data be inputted and evaluated. Many of these decisions will be guided by the available data such as the particular context to be focused on or the specific time. Others will be decided through consensus and depend on various responsibilities of the personnel involved such as when to input and evaluate the data. Regardless of whether these decisions are based on preliminary data collected before DBR is instituted, or whether they are more focused on the responsibilities of the school personnel and adults involved, it's important to remember that documenting these specifics

increases the accountability and makes sure that the data is being collected, and inputted, and then evaluated so that better decisions whether the interventions are working can be made.

Slide 5 - Once a plan has been put in place for collecting, inputting, and evaluating the data that will be produced through the use of the DBR, it is time to actually implement the form. Before we get into the process for preparing and collecting the data, let's talk about what a DBR is. A DBR is a method for collecting data on student behavior that merges a rating scale approach and direct observation. This simply means that teachers will provide a daily rating for the student's target behavior rather than collect observational data such as a tally count. This assists with making the implementation of the data collection more feasible and more easily integrated into instruction.

Slide 6 - Now let's take a look at the DBR form. As you can see, the DBR form has space for basic information about the time and context during which the behavior will be recorded. The form also has a space for the definition of the target behavior which can be useful to make sure the instrument is applied consistently across days and times for the student. Also notice that the DBR scale ranges from 0 to 10. Ideally, there is some information available to anchor these points so that teachers are rating students similarly across different applications of the DBR. The development of anchors for these points should be based on some preliminary information collected while identifying and selecting the target behavior.

Slide 7 - It is probably useful to see how to develop anchors for the data points. As you can see, the ten points on the scale can be divided into low, medium, and high categories. These categories can be thought of as either frequency counts such as the behavior occurring 3 or 8 times during an observation period. Or the categories can be thought of as percentage of time such as the student was paying attention for 40% of the class period. Regardless of whether the behavior is thought of as a frequency or percentage of time, it can be very useful to link these points to specific occurrences or percentages of behavior. Again, the advantage of using these anchors is to ensure that the instrument is applied consistently from day to day so that you can make better, more well-rounded decisions about whether the student is responding to the intervention that you have selected.

Slide 8 - Here is a formal application of the process for developing a DBR. Here we see an operational definition for Toby's aggression. Toby's aggression is defined as the use of any aberrant behavior that involved making contact with others with an attempt to injure or harm. This includes punching, hitting, kicking, spitting, scratching, pushing, and biting. This does not include patting on the back or shaking hands. As you can see, the definition is very specific as to what the behavior includes and does not include, to the point that it should be pretty clear to school personnel whether the behavior occurred or not. It is this level of specificity that should be strived for to ensure there is little confusion on whether the behavior has taken place. The reason for being so clear is to make sure the behavior of greatest concern is being accurately targeted.

Slide 9 - The preliminary data on Toby's aggressive behaviors allowed the school personnel to develop anchors for each point on the scale. These anchors are presented in the blue box and indicate that 1-2 occurrences are associated with a rating of a 1 while 10 or more are associated

with a rating of a 10. During the math period, Toby's teacher estimated that there were approximately 4 acts of aggression. A key point here is that the teacher does not need to formally collect data, but rather, take a best guess as to the number of occurrences. Because the teacher is using their best guess, it is critical for them to make the rating as close to the end of the observation period as possible rather than wait an hour or day. This requires the teacher to have the form ready for action so that they can quickly make their rating at the end of the period, which, in this case, was math class.

Slide 10 - Here is an example of what the DBR might look like for a different student. As you can see, the definition of the target behavior is included as well as an estimate of the anchors used. So, for Jeff, the behavior was threats, which refer to verbal statements that refer to harming other people including peers or teachers. The school team estimated again that 1-2 occurrences would be marked as a 0; 5 occurrences would be marked as a 5, and 10 or more as a 10. This level of detail provides the teacher with a reminder as to the rating system which can assist with implementing the DBR consistently across different observations and increase the quality of the data.

Slide 11 – It is also worth noting that there are some standard DBR items. These items have been widely researched and might match some of the behaviors you identify as target behaviors. These behaviors include academic engagement, disruption, and respect. You can choose to use these items in lieu of the ones that you developed on your own if they are appropriate for your particular student. If you choose to use these standard items, we recommend that you follow the same format for developing anchors based on preliminary data collected during the pre-implementation process.

Slide 12 – Now, just to review, there are three key considerations for increasing the likelihood that the form is going to be applied consistently. And if the form is applied consistently, the quality of the data will be improved. The first is that it is key to review the definitions and anchors to make sure that the instrument is being used consistently across time periods. The second is having the form ready to be completed so that at the end of the observation period the person that's charged with completing the form has it ready so that rather than trying to draw a memory as to the number of occurrences or the percentage of time engaged, they are able to provide a rating that is more accurate because it is more closely associated with the time period. And the final one is just a reiteration of the previous one. Have the form ready so that you can complete the DBR as close to the pre-specified time period as possible. This will improve the quality of the data and your ability to make better decisions based on that information.

Slide 13 - Now, I know we only have a limited amount of time, but it is important to be aware of why you are taking the data. The reason DBR's are used is to monitor student behavior so that progress can be monitored both before and after the implementation of an intervention. So, we use the DBR before to get an idea of current level of performance and keeping using it after the implementation of an intervention so that we can see if behavior has in fact improved. The method we use to evaluate improvement is through graphing the data each day so that we can literally see improvement (or not) with our own eyes. The use of graphs also allows for the information to be shared with key stakeholders such as families, colleagues, and even students to show improvement. The resulting patterns on the graphs are used to make decisions on whether

the intervention should be removed, revised, or retained. This is an example of how we make data-based decisions using behavioral data.

Slide 14 - In conclusion, there are three takeaways. The first is that developing good data collection tools is critical for making decisions about what is working or not for students. With this, it is also important to recognize that it is hard work, so don't be discouraged if you experience a learning curve at first. You will become more savvy over time and be able to anticipate some of the challenges with future students. Second, it is important to remember that because this is hard, it is only to be done for 3-5% of students. If there are more, then it is time to take a look at the Tier 1 and Tier2 supports available in the environment. The third and final takeaway is that it is important to remember that it is critical to individualize the assessment process for the student just as it is important to develop an individualized intervention. This requires carefully considering the behaviors to target and developing specific, unique definitions for each student.

So, with that, I want thank you for taking time to listen to me today and I look forward to hearing about your successes.