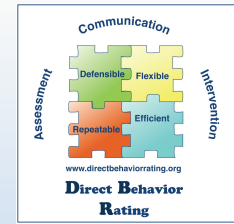




# Improving Outcomes for Students with Autism and Their Families Through Utilizing Direct Behavior Rating (DBR) to Communicate Student Data Across Settings

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## Abstract

The quality of cross-systems collaboration has been associated with improvements in parental satisfaction, student outcomes, and family-school partnerships, particularly for students with autism, a population that has an increased need for such efforts. However, there is a lack of cost-effective and efficient tools to facilitate communication across these systems (among home, school, and services provided outside of the school). There is also a need for quick and easy to use student progress monitoring methods to inform decision-making. This study will use Direct Behavior Rating (DBR), a method of behavioral assessment that has been described as offering an efficient, flexible, and defensible option (e.g., Chafouleas, Riley-Tillman, & Christ, 2009), to collect data through a Home-School Log. The log will be used to facilitate communication and data-based decision making among parents and professionals within and outside of school, in order to improve student outcomes for elementary school children with autism. A multiple-baseline design procedure across 3-6 student participants will be used. It is hypothesized that participants will experience improvements in cross-systems communication, data-based decision making, and student outcomes.

## Background

Public schools are required by federal law to provide children receiving special education services with evidence-based practices and also are required to involve parents in those practices (IDEiA, 2004). Home-School Logs are a type of evidence-based practice that has been used in schools for years to involve parents in their child's education, improve communication between parents and educators, and collect behavioral data (Chafouleas, Riley-Tillman, & Sassu, 2006). Communication between home and school has been associated with improved parent-educator relationships and student outcomes (e.g., Bruder, 1996). Several empirically based research studies have found that interventions involving parents and/or families have shown efficacy in positively impacting children's education (Christenson & Carlson, 2005). Parental satisfaction, particularly for parents of students on the autism spectrum, has been significantly associated with the quality of communication between parents and their child's school (Whitaker, 2007). Furthermore, consistent, two-way messages between home and school can potentially minimize some of the barriers facing students by increasing opportunity for positive communication, promoting consistency of consequences across settings, and encouraging collaborative problem-solving efforts (Esler et al., 2002).

There is also a need for quick, easy student progress monitoring methods to inform decision-making. Direct Behavior Rating (DBR) is a form of behavioral assessment that involves making a brief rating of student behavior following a target activity. DBR has the potential for being a flexible and efficient progress monitoring method (Chafouleas et al., 2009).

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## Objective

- To provide schools with a home-school log utilizing DBR instrumentation and procedures to facilitate cross-systems communication and data-based decision-making for individuals working with elementary students with autism.
- Student outcome data will be monitored in order to evaluate whether use of the log, which is intended to improve the consistency of communication and consequences across settings, also helps to improve student behavior.

## Method

**Design:** A multiple baseline procedure across 3-6 student participants with autism, Asperger's syndrome, or PDD-NOS  
**Pre-Baseline:** Researcher meets with student's team of parents and educators to discuss target behaviors, target activities, and provide procedural training.  
**Baseline:** Each day they are working with the student, educators will rate the percentage of time the student displayed each pre-specified target behavior during various pre-specified activities using a Baseline DBR Form  
**Intervention:** Educators continue to rate student's behaviors, but do so on the Daily Ratings pages in the Home-School Log binder, providing comments if desired. Parents complete Home Activity that involves a quick activity with the child (e.g., reading, playing game) and writing any questions or comments for educators. Weekly, educators graph students' ratings and evaluate the data.

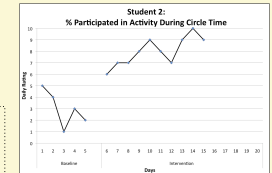
Figure 1. Portion of Daily Ratings Page

Figure 2. Portion of Home Activity Page

## Expected Results

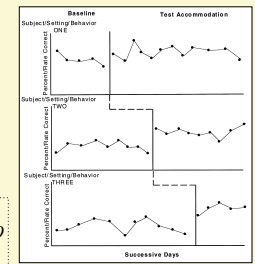
- It is hypothesized that participants will experience improvements in:
  - cross-systems communication
  - data-based decision making
  - student outcomes

Figure 3. Example of one student's weekly data graph generated by educators



- These improvements will be measured summaratively and formatively via:
  - self-report measures pre and post
  - DBR data obtained through educator-completed Daily Ratings pages
  - systematic direct observation data obtained by researchers
  - permanent products (weekly Student Progress Evaluation forms and graphs)

Figure 4. Example of multiple baseline data graph - DBR and SDO data will be presented in this format



## Summary and Conclusions

- The proposed Home-School Log may:
  - ease collection and communication of data across systems,
  - facilitate data-based decision-making,
  - improve student outcomes,
  - improve family-school partnership, and
  - improve coordination of interdisciplinary care.

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