



# DIRECT BEHAVIOR RATING (DBR) AS AN INTERVENTION TOOL: INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

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An incentive program is a system that establishes a behavioral contract between a student and adult. This behavioral contract usually involves an incentive for the student to exhibit desirable behaviors. Incentive programs are ultimately used to promote or encourage specific actions or behavior during a defined period. The use of these programs can ultimately increase the likelihood of appropriate behavior while decreasing the occurrence of unwanted behavior. In short, the use of incentive programs provides a system in which students are provided feedback on their behavior and consequently rewarded for showing good behavior.

The main objective of incentive programs is to increase the occurrence of appropriate student behavior and decrease the occurrence of unwanted behaviors. Because incentive programs work in conjunction with behavioral contracts, students are aware of the expectations held for them in the classroom. The behavioral contract (written or verbal) is a contingency plan that outlines expected behaviors and the consequences that result from exhibiting desired behaviors. Students are provided feedback on their behavior. Desirable behavior should increase as a result of positive feedback and rewards received from the established incentive programs.

Incentive programs are also a beneficial solution for decreasing problem behavior because they give the student access to attention. Many students misbehave in class and at home in an effort to obtain attention from adults. Incentive programs are a system wherein the student receives not only attention when feedback is received from the adult, but *positive* attention when behavioral expectations are met and the student receives their incentive.

## **Why use DBR(Direct Behavior Rating) within incentive programs?**

DBR is a beneficial compliment to incentive programs. DBR scales serve as a tool on which to build the incentive program. Because behaviors are explicitly defined and ratings are pre-set, adults can easily monitor behavior during an observation period. A behavioral contract can utilize DBR to provide feedback and serve as a tool for establishing behavioral criteria. For example, for compliant behavior, if the student averages ratings of 8 or above for a rating period they will receive 10 minutes of extra free time.

## **Who can use DBR for incentive programs?**

Incentive Programs can be used by anyone involved with the child:

- Teachers and other school personnel (e.g. counselor, school psychologist)
- Parents, guardians, and other family members

### **Potential Benefits of Using DBR in Incentive Programs:**

- Provides positive feedback for exhibiting appropriate behavior instead of focusing on acknowledgement of negative behavior
- Helps operationalize and monitor target behaviors
- Does not take away from classroom instruction

### **Using Incentive Programs**

The purpose of the incentive programs is to establish behavioral standards that the student should meet. When behavioral expectations are met, students receive positive feedback in the form of incentives (extra play time, candy, etc.). As aforementioned, this incentive increases and maintains the likelihood that the student will continue showing appropriate behavior.

Incentive programs provide another way to share positive feedback with a student. Too often problem behavior is addressed while the occurrence of appropriate behavior is overlooked. Incentive programs provide an opportunity for adults to acknowledge and reinforce appropriate behavior. The use of DBR within incentive programs allows adults to track and subsequently acknowledge positive changes in behavior.

When working with students in incentive programs, it is important to keep in mind the student's age, capabilities, and other unique factors that characterize the student. For example, students who are younger or have developmental delays may need additional instruction and training for incentive programs.

### **Examples of Incentive Programs**

*Point Systems/Token Economies:* When students exhibit desired behavior (as depicted by their ratings on the DBR scale) they will receive a point. When a certain amount of points or tokens are collected, students can receive incentives.

*Graphic charts:* (ex: student receives stickers on a chart)

\*This list is not exhaustive, incentive programs are flexible and there are other incentive programs available.

### **Categories of Incentives**

- Access to tangibles (stickers, candy, toys)
- Access to desirable activity (extra free time, computer time)
- Access to attention (time spent with preferred adult or peer)
- Escape from undesirable acts (reduced amount of problems, alternate activity)
- Escape from undesirable social situations (getting to work one-on-one)

### **Steps for implementing Incentive Programs**

- 1) Know what rewards are most realistic for the situation and for the student (i.e. you may want to consider alternate awards depending on the age of the child or child's preferences)
- 2) Pick appropriate reward for desirable behavior (praise, additional free-time, sticker, candy, etc.)
- 3) Establish rating schedule and how often student will receive feedback for behavior
- 4) Establish criteria student must meet to obtain reward
- 5) Determine reward schedules (how often student will receive incentive)
- 6) Explain behavioral contract to child by clearly outlining behavioral expectations and incentives involved for exhibiting correct behavior (can be verbal or a written document)
- 7) Rate student behavior using DBR scale
- 8) Provide feedback to student/reward student

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