CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Disruptive student behavior in the classroom has long been a source of stress for teachers. Results of a 2004 survey found that over a third of teachers had seriously considered leaving the teaching profession or knew someone who had left because of difficulty handling student behavior problems. This issue was particularly evident for new teachers, with over three quarters of them feeling unprepared to deal with student behavior problems (Public Agenda, 2004). In another survey 25% of teachers ranked classroom management as their highest priority for professional development (Coalition for Psychology in the Schools and Education, 2006). In the same survey teachers also ranked highly the need to learn more about communicating with parents about the classroom behavior problems exhibited by their children. Most teachers get into the field because they want to support student learning. Yet, effective management of challenging behaviors is necessary in order to create an environment conducive to effective teaching.

PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

This book is intended for those practitioners who are involved in supporting students with academic and behavior problems in school settings. This includes school-based practitioners, such as school psychologists, teachers, school counselors, guidance counselors, and principals, in addition to practitioners based outside of the school, such as clinical psychologists, behavior analysts, behavioral pediatricians, and social workers. This book is also intended for use by graduate training programs that prepare students to embark on the careers mentioned above.

The purpose of this book is to prepare you, the reader, to employ the daily report card (DRC) as a flexible and dynamic tool for promoting student behaviors that enable a student's success in school and, in so doing, diminish behaviors that get in the way of that success and the success of others. This is a translational book. Our goal is not to provide an exhaustive review of the literature on DRCs or to provide a purely academic discussion concerning DRCs. We are also not going to describe an intervention that we ourselves created. The DRC has been around as a school-based intervention for challenging classroom behavior for at least 40 years, and there

are a number of resources that we would recommend for additional reading (see pp. 119–120 for an annotated bibliography and other resources). Rather, based on the available literature and our own experience in research and practice, we hope to provide you with the tools necessary to successfully implement DRC interventions in your own setting. Our key goals in this book are to provide you with an understanding of the strengths and limitations of the DRC as an intervention and measurement tool. Our intention is to provide you with a user-friendly guide to (1) identify students who would benefit from the DRC intervention, and (2) design and implement the DRC as an intervention or possibly use it solely as a measurement tool for progress monitoring. We also have provided a number of resources that will facilitate your use of the DRC and to maximize the benefits derived from your efforts. We do this because the DRC can be used in different ways with different students and across classrooms.

In the following sections of this chapter we describe the DRC and why you should be interested in using it as an intervention and assessment tool. Schools are increasingly moving toward tiered models of intervention that integrate problem solving, intervention, and monitoring into a systematic approach to support students who engage in challenging behaviors. Therefore we also discuss how the DRC fits into a three-tiered model of schoolwide prevention and intervention.

The following case example is based on our experience in working with children and youth in the school setting. We refer to this case example throughout the book to help the reader contextualize the concepts and procedures we discuss.

> Sky is an 8-year-old girl in a general education third-grade classroom situated in a small suburb. Sky has been earning A's and B's in school since first grade, but from the beginning of the current academic year, she has been falling behind her peers in math and her grades have suffered in several subjects. Sky's homework often is missing or incomplete, and she frequently does not complete her classwork in the time allotted. Sky's teacher, Mr. Bartlet, regularly reprimands her for talking to her peers in class, for humming loudly, and for walking around the room when she should be working. She tends to be "sassy" and often requires several reminders in order to follow directions. Mr. Bartlet is concerned about Sky's behaviors because they are disruptive to the other students in class, and he admits to being frustrated because his attempts to address these problems have not been successful.
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> Sky's parents are concerned about the downturn in her grades and her diminished motivation for school. They have withheld television viewing and other privileges when they have heard bad news from Mr. Bartlet via e-mail or in quarterly reports, but they also admit to being somewhat inconsistent in their enforcement. Sky also reports that she "doesn't care" when they punish her, which has left her parents wondering whether they are doing the right thing. They regularly work with Sky on her homework and talk with her about how things are going at school (e.g., when tests and projects are due, how she is behaving). However, what they hear from Sky seems to be inconsistent with reports from her teacher, as she often indicates to her parents that things are going well at school.

The case of Sky is fairly typical of the types of problems we see in our work in schools. A common story that we hear from the parents with whom we work is that they often are surprised when reviewing their child's quarterly report cards. Grades that fall below parental expectations often are punctuated by comments such as "not working to potential," "frequently

distracted," "chatty," or "talks back." Parents tell us, with exasperation, that they ask their child everyday how things are going in school and the answer is almost always the same: "Good." We often hear about brief spurts of improvement following quarterly report cards, but such gains are typically short-lived. For many children, quarterly report cards of academic performance and school behaviors are an effective means of monitoring progress and managing contingencies, and they continue to be used across grade levels. For other children, however, it is clear that more frequent feedback and coordination between the school and home setting regarding school performance are necessary.

WHAT IS THE DRC?

The tools and procedures we discuss in this book fall under an umbrella of strategies that affords a systematic method for providing frequent (e.g., one or more times daily) feedback to students on their behavior. Since such interventions first appeared in the research literature in the late 1960s, these tools have been known by many names in addition to DRC including "daily behavior report cards" (Schumaker, Hovell, & Sherman, 1977) or "daily report cards" (O'Leary & Pelham, 1978), "home-based reinforcement" (Bailey, Wolf, & Phillips, 1970), "home notes" (Blechman, Taylor, & Schrader, 1981), and "home–school notes" (Kelley, 1990). The overwhelming majority of studies has focused on providing intervention to individual students. However, there are examples in the literature of classwide administration, and often more than one student in a classroom has received the intervention simultaneously. A host of different formats and procedures, all based upon the same underlying principles, has been used successfully to address a wide array of academic and disruptive classroom behaviors. We discuss several different formats of DRC in Chapter 4; here we would like to give you a general idea of the types of DRC we focus upon in this book.

When we refer to the *DRC*, we are talking about all of the materials and procedures that are used in the process of implementation. A key tool in the implementation of the DRC is the DRC form. Figure 1.1 is an example of a DRC for Sky. A DRC form consists of a clearly defined list of behaviors that have been deemed appropriate targets for intervention (e.g., interrupting, noncompliance, academic productivity, academic engagement). Associated with each item is a means of rating the target behavior (usually in terms of frequency, duration, or percentage complete) across one or more observation intervals (e.g., time of day or class period). In some cases, the goal for each behavior is included in the wording of the item (e.g., *fewer than eight instances of inappropriate noises*, as in the first item of our sample DRC for Sky), and teachers rate each item using a "yes" (goal was met) or "no" (goal was not met) format. In other cases the teacher can rate the frequency of the item or rate the item on a scale and then record whether a predetermined goal was or was not met. As part of the DRC procedures teachers provide regular feedback to the child regarding target behaviors, as well as liberal praise for working toward and/or meeting daily goals. DRC forms are sent home with the child each day, and parents review daily and weekly progress and provide home-based privileges (e.g., use of bicycle, computer time) contingent on meeting goals. Thus, the home and school are linked on a daily basis—a critical component for children when consistency and coordination across settings are essential (Dussault, 1996; Koegel & Koegel, 1996). In addition, a DRC provides a record of

	Reading	Writing	Math	Science
				Date: *2/29/2012*
Fewer than eight instances of inappropriate noises.	Y N	Y N	N/A	N/A
Starts work with fewer than two reminders.	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Completes assignments within allotted time.	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Talks back fewer than two times.	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N

Completed _____ % of assigned homework.   Number of Yeses _____   Number of Nos _____

Mr. Barlet's Comments: _____

_____

_____

Home Rewards and Comments: _____

_____

_____

Mr. Barlet's Initials: _____   Parent's Initials: _____

FIGURE 1.1. Example of a DRC for Sky.

student progress over the course of intervention. When used as an intervention, there are three basic components to the DRC: (1) the rating of the DRC form, (2) frequent encouraging teacher feedback regarding progress toward goals, and (3) home-based rewards and encouragement for reaching goals. As mentioned earlier, a DRC also can be used as a measurement tool to assess student response to an intervention other than the DRC (Riley-Tillman, Chafouleas, & Briesch, 2007). We further discuss the use of the DRC as a measurement tool in Chapter 7.

HOW DO DRCs WORK?

There are two main ways by which the DRC is thought to enhance the behavior and academic outcomes of children. First, for many students for whom the use of the DRC is warranted, school has become a frustrating environment, where most of the feedback they receive from teachers is negative (e.g., corrective or reprimanding). Such an approach places emphasis on negative behavior, and in some cases can increase problem behaviors by rewarding them with teacher attention. Moreover, conflict between children with behavior problems and their teachers is a strong predictor of later problems (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Ladd & Burgess, 2001). Studies have found rates of teacher praise to be particularly low for students with behavior problems (e.g., Shores et al., 1993; Wehby, Symons, & Shores, 1995). Increasing teacher praise has been demonstrated to improve reading outcomes (Gable & Shores, 1980), to increase academic engagement (Sutherland, Wehby, & Copeland, 2000), and to decrease disruptive behavior (Gunter, Denny, Jack, Shores, & Nelson, 1993).

In contrast, the DRC approach advocated in this book is a positive one, wherein only desired behaviors are attended to, encouraged, and rewarded. The items on DRC forms can be positively worded and teachers told to provide positive and encouraging feedback throughout the day as students work toward achieving their daily goals. This focus on positive behaviors and goal attainment should also result in a classroom environment with a better balance between positive and negative feedback. This balance is important; teachers and parents should strive to achieve the "magic ratio" of 5:1 positive to negative interactions with children because higher ratios of positive to negative interactions have been found to predict favorable attitudes toward work and relationships and are a component of an effective approach to classroom management (Fabiano et al., 2007). Moreover, there is evidence that children who have more supportive exchanges with teachers are better liked by their peers (see Hughes, Cavell, & Wilson, 2001).

Second, most children with significant behavior problems will require some contingency management approach and parental involvement for meaningful school improvement to be achieved (Pelham & Fabiano, 2008). The school–home communication and home-based contingencies (i.e., rewards/privileges for appropriate behavior) may each contribute to the effectiveness of the DRC and also nurture child investment in meeting daily goals or goals established for smaller increments of time (e.g., one class period that may be problematic for the student). By placing a child in an earning situation at the start of each school day (e.g., "If I meet my goals, I can participate in fun after-school activities"), children are placed in a position to succeed and make good choices. This is different from the all-too-common approach of taking away privileges after failing to meet goals (punishments that often are ambiguous, reactive, and unexpected—in these cases the child is unsuccessful and it is too late for him or her to make a good choice. Together, these consequences of DRC implementation can work to foster improved classroom behavior and academic functioning.

WHY SHOULD I USE DRCs?

In addition to the DRC's positive approach to intervention, there are several other advantages that make it an attractive option for promoting behaviors that are related to success in school settings. In this section we discuss the evidence base for DRC use, its efficiency and acceptability, its flexibility, and its utility in linking systems in support of students.

Several decades of research support the efficacy of the DRC. One of the first published reports of using the DRC can be traced back to work in the 1960s when middle school students with significant behavior problems in a residential program attended a special summer classroom at the University of Kansas (Bailey et al., 1970). As an example of the behavior problems, in the academic year prior to the study one boy had missed so much academic instruction because of time spent in the principal's office that he ended up having to repeat the grade. Initially, while the students attended the summer class, they received no DRCs. Later in the study, students were sent home with a positive note each school day, regardless of their behavior in class. Under this condition, the children showed no improvement. The children also did not improve when the teacher provided specific feedback on whether each child met established behavioral goals. It was only after the specific feedback was linked to rewards in the home that the children improved in their behavior. In fact, once the specific feedback was linked to these home conse-

quences, all the children improved and began behaving appropriately in the classroom almost 100% of the time. Given the seriousness of the behaviors exhibited by children at the beginning of the study, these results were quite remarkable. They also teach us an important lesson: Feedback, warnings, and good news notes alone may be insufficient for some students, and feedback should be linked to positive consequences in the school or home setting.

Following this early study, many more investigations have demonstrated that a DRC is an effective way to improve functioning of children in both regular education and special education settings. Moreover, several studies have supported the use of DRC as a best practice for improving the classroom performance and behavior of students with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in general education (O'Leary, Pelham, Rosenbaum, & Price, 1976) and special education (Fabiano et al., 2010). Indeed, the Department of Education lists the DRC as a cornerstone intervention for students with ADHD (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

The DRC can be an unobtrusive and efficient intervention strategy. Since ratings can be completed in less than 1 minute, alterations to teacher classroom practice are minimal (Lahey et al., 1977). The DRC is also an efficient and effective procedure for monitoring outcomes in important areas of children's psychosocial functioning (Pelham, Fabiano, & Massetti, 2005; Riley-Tillman et al., 2007). The DRC has been found sensitive both to pharmacological (e.g., Pelham et al., 2001) and behavioral treatment effects (e.g., Pelham, Massetti, et al., 2005).

The efficiency of the DRC is an important consideration because the time needed to implement an intervention is a key factor associated with how acceptable it is to teachers (Witt, Martens, & Elliott, 1984). One of the reasons acceptability is important is because it is thought to be an important determinant in the degree to which teachers use an intervention at all and whether they implement the procedures consistently. Witt and Elliott (1985) proposed a theoretical model of acceptability that hypothesizes a reciprocal relationship between the acceptability of a treatment, its use, the degree to which it is implemented as prescribed, and its effectiveness. Few studies have actually investigated the degree to which teachers find the DRC an acceptable intervention approach. Chafouleas, Riley-Tillman, and Sassu (2006) conducted a survey of teachers concerning their use and acceptance of the DRC. A total of 64% of the 123 teachers who returned surveys reported using some kind of DRC. The study makes clear that teachers use the DRC for a variety of purposes (a communication tool, an intervention to change behavior, a tool to monitor behavior) and that they use an assortment of different approaches to DRC-related interventions with respect to who receives the intervention (e.g., individual student, whole class), types of consequences provided (verbal, tangible) and where the consequences are delivered (school or home). Overall, the teachers surveyed reported that the DRC was an acceptable approach for both assessment and intervention. Very little information is available as to how parents and children perceive the DRC. Only one study by Lahey et al. (1977) provided encouraging results in this regard. The acceptability of the intervention among teachers and parents likely supports its use. Another factor that would seem to support the consistent use of the intervention is that teachers and parents use the procedures each school day. An approach such as the DRC explicitly addresses potential teacher drift and maintains, on a daily basis, the teacher's attention to behavioral goals. This aspect of the DRC encourages consistency because the procedures quickly become routine. Also, teachers and parents create permanent products recording their adherence to many of the procedures. That is, teachers record their ratings on the form, and parents sign the forms to acknowledge their receipt and to

record when rewards are dispensed. One advantage of continuously monitoring child behavior is that important changes are documented in real time so that the DRC can sound an alarm. If there is a day or two when the child is not meeting goals, this report should alert parents and teachers that something is amiss and they need to problem-solve regarding the intervention or possibly other areas of functioning.

Teacher feedback to the child regarding progress toward goals may also serve as an antecedent to future appropriate behavior by the child (Sugai & Colvin, 1997) and contribute to amenable parent–teacher relationships (Dussault, 1996). Thus, in addition to acute beneficial behavioral effects, the DRC may also be a helpful enhancement to the important relationships between parents, teachers, and children (Pianta, Steinberg, & Rollins, 1995) as well as serve as a data-driven monitoring device with which schools can evaluate the progress of children demonstrating academic and behavior problems. Information collected via the DRC provides outstanding feedback for annual reviews of progress toward individualized education plan (IEP) goals and empirically informs adjustments to the IEP (e.g., Fabiano et al., 2010; Vannest, Burke, Payne, Davis, & Soars, 2011). Indeed, the DRC can help increase communication and collaboration between home and school, which is mandated by special education law (e.g., Public Law 94-142), and the DRC is a practical mechanism through which these requirements can be realized.

Finally, the DRC procedure may be an essential enhancement to IEP programming by preventing teacher drift from engaging in the practices designed to meet the explicit goals and objectives operationalized in the IEP. It is now well established that a single to a few consultation visits are insufficient to maintain significant change in teachers' approach to students with behavior/learning problems (Fuchs & Fuchs 1989; Martens & Ardoin, 2002), and teachers and other school staff often require explicit instruction and guidance in the process of establishing a behavioral intervention plan (e.g., Horner, Sugai, Todd, & Lewis-Palmer, 2000).

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THIS BOOK

We believe it is important to contextualize the DRC in a three-tiered model of problem solving. Schools across the country are implementing schoolwide plans to support positive social behavior and academic achievement. Typically initiatives for academics and social behavior have been implemented independently, but recently there have been increasing calls for an integrated approach (McIntosh, Goodman, & Bohanon, 2010; McKinney, Bartholomew, & Gray, 2010). This call for integration makes sense because the links between academic and behavior problems are well established. In addition, the same conceptual model (see Figure 1.2) applies well across academic and behavioral domains. In each tier of the model students receive supports (whether in an academic or behavioral domain) that are commensurate with their individual needs. Each student's level of need is determined by data gathered at each tier.

In Tier 1 (universal instruction and supports) all students receive research-based instruction with special focus on universal behavioral interventions or the instructional areas known to impact student improvement. School professionals are familiar with the five big ideas in reading (i.e., phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) delineated by the National Reading Panel. In terms of behavior, schools typically generate three
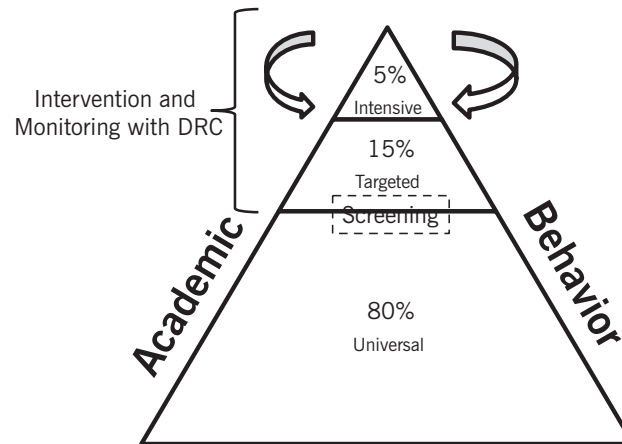
FIGURE 1.2. The three-tiered problem-solving model.

to five expectations that reflect social competence (e.g., be there, be ready, be responsible, be respectful). These expectations are made explicit, and students receive regular encouragement to meet them. In Tier 1 all students are screened several times over the course of the school year to inform school staff about the effectiveness of instruction in Tier 1 and to identify students who are not responding adequately to that instruction. In Tier 2 (targeted intervention and supports) students receive intervention in the identified problem area in addition to the instruction provided in Tier 1. In Tier 2 students are assessed more frequently to monitor their response to interventions and to facilitate decision making for troubleshooting the Tier 2 intervention or determining whether more intensive supports are necessary. It is expected that most students will respond to the supports provided in Tier 1 and Tier 2, but approximately 5% of students will need more intensive intervention. In Tier 3 (intensive interventions) assessment and intervention efforts become more idiosyncratic and may exceed the resource demands that are afforded in the general education setting. In Tier 3 student response to intervention should be assessed regularly, and interventions should be designed based on individualized assessments. In the behavioral domain such assessments typically involve functional behavioral assessment.

This book is designed to provide tools for use at each of the three tiers in the aforementioned problem-solving model. We have developed a model for screening and intervention based on the DRC. In Chapter 2 we provide an overview of the model we call the Integrated Screening and Intervention System (ISIS; Volpe, Fabiano, & Briesch, 2012) and explain how the model can be used to conduct universal screening in Tier 1 to identify students who might benefit from DRCs. We believe that DRCs are an excellent choice for a Tier 2 intervention (see Vannest et al., in press) and can serve as a foundational component of a Tier 3 intervention package. DRCs support both the academic and behavioral sides of the problem-solving model. Although they do not target academic skills directly, they traditionally have targeted both academic productivity and engagement/motivation, which are considered key behaviors that enable academic success (e.g., DiPerna, Volpe, & Elliott, 2001, 2005; Volpe et al., 2006).

In Chapters 3 and 4 we provide detailed information concerning the construction of DRCs and the procedures that are necessary for successful implementation. In these chapters we

explain how the ISIS can be used to streamline the process of DRC design and implementation. In Chapters 5 and 6 we discuss important considerations and provide tools for working with students and parents, respectively. Chapter 7 is dedicated to considerations for using the DRC as a progress monitoring tool. This chapter discusses measurement concerns and also provides a framework for making decisions based on data gathered using a DRC.

Chapter 8 (authored by Amy M. Briesch and Brian Daniels) explores the process of transitioning from a DRC intervention to a self-management intervention for the purpose of maintaining the gains of the DRC intervention and promoting self-regulation and generalization to settings not targeted directly in the DRC intervention. To paraphrase the beloved Scottish poet Robert Burns, our best-laid plans often go askew, and so we have dedicated Chapter 9 solely to the topic of problem solving a DRC-based intervention. This chapter discusses common pitfalls we have experienced in our use of DRCs and suggests recommendations on how to refine the DRC forms and procedures to maximize the impact of the intervention.

This book contains an extensive set of documents to help facilitate your use of DRCs. Throughout the book we refer to forms that we have provided to streamline the process of implementing the DRC. In addition, we have made available several digital forms for charting DRC data. These are available for purchasers to download at *www.guilford.com/volpe-forms*.