**DIFFERENTIALLY REINFORCING LOW RATES OF
MISBEHAVIOR WITH NORMAL
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN¹**

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Effective nonpunitive procedures for reducing counterproductive classroom behaviors are of potential benefit to both students and teachers. A recent strategy for dealing with this class of problem behaviors involves the reinforcement of acceptably low levels of such behavior. The laboratory version of this procedure, called differential reinforcement of low rates of responding (or DRL), provides for a reinforcer to be delivered contingent upon a response that is separated from the last preceding response by a minimum amount of time. To make this procedure more amenable to classroom use, the present authors have modified it so that a reinforcer is delivered if fewer than a specified number of responses occur within a preset time interval (Deitz and Repp, *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 1973, 6, 457-463). Previous studies using this procedure have found it effective in reducing and maintaining low rates of targeted behaviors. However, these effects have been demonstrated with groups of subjects and/or individuals from dependent populations. The present study investigated use of this modified DRL procedure with individual students in normal elementary classrooms. In the first of three studies, "talk-outs" of an 11-yr-old fifth-grade male were reduced when nonexchangeable gold stars were made contingent on two or fewer responses per session. During baseline sessions, an average of 4.45 talkouts were observed per 45-min session. Average responding subsequently fell to 1.83 when the modified DRL contingency was applied, increased to 7.60 during a reversal phase, and dropped again to an average of 1.20 when the contingency was re-applied. In the second study, out-of-seat behavior of a 12-yr-old sixth-grade female was reduced when gold stars were made contingent on two or fewer responses per 45-min class period. Baseline responding averaged 6.10 responses per session. When the contingency was applied, average responding fell to 0.16. During the reversal period, responding increased to an average of 6.00 and fell again, after the contingency was re-introduced to an average of 0.40. In the third study, a reduction in both talking-out and out-of-seat behaviors of another 11-yr-old fifth-grade male was demonstrated with a multiple-baseline design. Using different lengths of baselines, gold stars were made contingent first on a low rate of out-of-seat behavior, and then on a low rate of talk-outs. Out-of-seat responding fell from a baseline average of 7.50 to a treatment average of 1.14. Talk-outs went from a baseline average of 4.66 to a treatment average of 1.14. In all three studies, the modified DRL procedure proved effective with the children and was manageable by the classroom teacher. For the students, nonexchangeable conditioned reinforcers (stars) were sufficient to maintain lowered rates of inappropriate behavior with the modified DRL schedule; there was no need for an elaborate token economy, a process that in many cases may be only a form of behavioral "overkill". As in other studies investigating DRL schedules, students were not informed of their accumulation of responses; the differential effects of providing or withholding this feedback need to be investigated. Overall, these studies add single-subject replication with normal children to the literature on modified DRL procedures.

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Received 14 December 1973.

(Revision requested 1 March 1974.)

(Final acceptance 17 July 1974.)