EVALUATION OF A REINFORCEMENT PROCEDURE FOR
ACCELERATING WORK RATE IN A SELF-PACED COURSE¹

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Students in a self-paced child development course were assigned to one of seven groups. One bonus point, which contributed toward the student's final grade, was given for each unit completed during a specified two-week period. In a combined baseline-reversal design, bonus points could be earned at different times for each group, and some groups had weeks without bonus points interspersed between bonus weeks. All seven groups and 78% of individual students completed units at a faster rate during bonus periods than during the balance of the semester. For the 58 students completing the course, mean units per week during bonus periods was 2.40 (SD = 1.60); for the balance of the semester mean units per week was 0.96 (SD = 0.37). Awarding bonus points for a limited period early in the term appears to be a useful procedure for increasing rates during this period in which rates are typically low. Although similar effects have been reported by others (e.g., Miller, Weaver, and Semb, *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 1974, 7, 87-91), the advantage of the present procedure is that the increase in rate is accomplished by means of reinforcement for high rates rather than punishment (low grades or forced withdrawal) for low rates.

DESCRIPTORS: college education, individualized instruction, self-paced instruction, work rate, accelerating work completion, response rate, reinforcer, adults

¹The full text of this manuscript is deposited with the National Auxiliary Publications Service (NAPS). For copies, order NAPS Document #02667. Order from ASIS/NAPS Co., c/o Microfiche Publications, 305 East 46th Street, New York, New York 10017. Remit with order for each copy \$3.00 for microfiche or \$5.00 for photocopies. Make checks payable to Microfiche Publications. This research was supported in part by the American University Office of Program Research and Development and by NIMH Grant 10123.4829 to C. B. Ferster. Appreciation is expressed to Kathy Jaray for assistance in data tabulation.

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Received 14 February 1975.

(Final acceptance 3 June 1975.)