

Understanding the CBRS as a Teacher Rating Scale: Guidance for Ensuring Accurate Student Ratings

Overview of the CBRS

The Child Behavior Rating Scale ([CBRS](#)) is a teacher rating scale used as part of VKRP to gather information about a student's self-regulation, social skills, and mental health well-being in the classroom:

- **Self-regulation skills** (10 items): skills that support students to manage their attention, emotions, and behaviors to adapt to the demands of the school environment (e.g., listen to others, follow expectations and multi-step directions, and stay focused on tasks).
- **Social skills** (7 items): skills that support students to successfully navigate interactions and build relationships with peers and adults (e.g., cooperate in a group, express thoughts and emotions, and resolve conflicts in a positive way).
- **Mental Health Well-being** (5 items): behaviors supporting children's overall mental health well-being.

Why VKRP Uses the CBRS

The CBRS provides valuable information about students' classroom behavior as seen by the teacher. The CBRS demonstrates reliability and validity with students across different ages, racial and ethnic groups, and cultural contexts ranging from three to eight years of age. A summary of this research can be found in the [CBRS Overview](#).

Rating Students Objectively and Accurately

The CBRS is one brief, screening measure. It is not designed to comprehensively assess students' self-regulation and social skills. The CBRS scores are based upon teachers' views of students' behaviors in the classroom. The CBRS is not a direct, standardized task that a student completes to assess their skill level. Teachers' reports of students' skills and behavior can be influenced by many factors including their own characteristics (Mason et al., 2014; Pigott & Cowen, 2000; Waterman et al., 2012) which may include their own beliefs and value systems including those related to gender, race/ethnicity, culture, disability, religion, language, socioeconomic status, etc. Teachers must make intentional efforts to rate students objectively and without bias. Below, we provide guidance on how teachers should use the CBRS to rate students objectively and accurately.

1. **Get to know their students.** In the fall, teachers should wait at least four weeks into the school year to complete the CBRS. Students need time to acclimate to their classroom context. Teachers also need time to interact with students, make personal connections with them, build supportive teacher-student relationships, and get to know students and their families before completing the CBRS. At mid-year and in the spring, also take time to observe students' behaviors before completing the CBRS.
2. **Observe a student's behaviors across contexts.** The self-regulatory and social behaviors students display will vary across activity time (e.g., morning, afternoon), settings (e.g., whole group, small group, individual activities, lunch, outdoor, etc.), and subjects (e.g., literacy, mathematics).

Observing students across these different contexts allows a teacher to obtain a more complete picture of students' average behaviors. Teachers can observe students across various points in time and in different contexts by selecting a few students at a time to intentionally observe and score, completing the CBRS in multiple rounds. When teachers intentionally observe student behavior across various times, activities, and subjects they can see how student behavior varies and provide more accurate and complete ratings.

3. ***Make notes of specific behaviors.*** Taking notes about specific, concrete behaviors that relate to the scale items during observations is a helpful strategy for increasing rating accuracy.
4. ***Reflect on their own beliefs.*** Teachers should ensure that they have the same expectations of students regardless of students' characteristics or backgrounds. Teachers should examine their CBRS data and look to see if their ratings are linked with the characteristics of students (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, disability status, language, socioeconomic status, etc.). If they see systematic differences in their ratings of students based on student characteristics, they should reflect on their beliefs and practices to ensure that their ratings of children are objective and accurate.
5. ***Seek out and incorporate information from other sources.*** Getting the perspective(s) of other staff members who work directly with students (e.g., educational specialists, school counselors, etc.) while completing ratings and when interpreting the data from their ratings provides a teacher with a more complete picture of the student's skills in different contexts. Importantly, the items on the CBRS do not provide teachers with any information about why a student may be demonstrating certain behaviors. Students' demonstration of self-regulation and social skills are heavily dependent upon the classroom context. For example, if a teacher reports that a student has trouble following instructions, this could be because the instructions are too complicated or unclear, the student has difficulty remembering things, and/or there is a cultural mismatch in the teacher and student expectations. Teachers need to gather more information to understand how to support a student to meet the demands of their classroom and build positive connections with teachers and peers. Teachers can (1) talk with other individuals who interact with and know the student well (e.g., caregivers/family members or other teachers), (2) intentionally observe to identify when and where certain behaviors are most likely to occur, and what happens before, during, and after they occur, and (3) examine the ways in which their own feelings and actions influence a student's behavior or how they, as the teachers, interpret it.

References

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- Waterman, C., McDermott, P. A., Fantuzzo, J. W., & Gadsden, V. L. (2012). The matter of assessor variance in early childhood education—Or whose score is it anyway? *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 27*(1), 46–54. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2011.06.003>