TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION AND SUPPORTS (PBIS)

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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION AND SUPPORTS (PBIS)

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ABSTRACT

A significant concern among administrators, teachers, and parents is disruptive student behavior. Educational researchers have found that traditional discipline policies such as suspension, expulsion, and other Zero Tolerance practices have failed to reduce disruptive behaviors in students. Furthermore, traditional discipline policies have been shown to discriminate against students of color and those with disabilities. This study investigated teachers’ perceptions of alternative discipline policies, specifically Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Participants were interviewed individually using questions developed by the researcher regarding experiences and perceptions of PBIS. Common themes identified from responses were the need for ongoing professional development, the need to develop interventions for high-risk students who are not responding to primary interventions, and the need to establish data collection protocols to evaluate the effectiveness of PBIS implementation, which was regarded as a limitation in the current implementation of PBIS.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Background of the Study

Student behavior remains a foremost concern among administrators, teachers, and parents (Skiba, 2014). A recent report published by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) regarding indicators of school crime and safety show that public schools continue to be challenged by a variety of behavioral problems among students which include, bullying, physical violence, hate-related words or actions, gang presence, possession or use of weapons, and drug use or possession (Zhang, Musu-Gillette, & Oudekerk, 2016).

Episodes of school violence in the United States have driven researchers and school administrators to explore effective methodologies and strategies to promote safety in classrooms and on campuses. In the 1980s and 90s, these concerns led many schools across the country to adopt zero-tolerance (ZT) discipline policies designed to impose stricter sanctions on youth. ZT policies are based on the presumption that swift and firm punishment of infractions, regardless of the severity or context of the incident, will prevent other students from engaging in similar behavior. While the implementation of ZT policies led to a striking increase in out-of-school suspensions and expulsions, it did not lead to improved student behavior or school safety (DeMitchell & Hambacher, 2016; Skiba, 2014; Zaslaw, 2010).
In 2005, the American Psychological Association commissioned a Zero Tolerance Task Force to study discipline policies and make recommendations. The Task Force concluded that, “zero tolerance has not been shown to improve school climate or school safety” (American Psychological Association, 2008, p. 860). Even more disturbing, studies have uncovered racial, socioeconomic, and gender disparities in rates of suspension and expulsion (Achilles, McLaughlin, & Croninger, 2007) and high suspension and expulsion rates are associated with higher rates of involvement in the juvenile justice system (Skiba, 2008).

Media reports of thousands of incidents in the United States in which the punishment seems out of proportion to the offense coupled with California’s legislation calling for a reduction in suspensions and expulsions, have led to a decrease in the use of ZT policies. In an effort to reduce disruptive behavior problems and improve overall climate, many schools have adopted comprehensive frameworks of behavioral prevention involving multiple tiers of support. Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is one such multi-tiered framework. PBIS is an approach based on the principles of applied behavior analysis and the public health service delivery model (Horner, 1990; Sugai, Horner, Algozzine, Barrett, Lewis, Anderson, & Simonsen, 2010; Walker, Horner, Sugai, Bullis, Sorague, Bricker, & Kaufman, 1996). The PBIS framework was designed to encourage and cultivate safety, prosocial behavior, and academic readiness by providing a structure to explicitly teach and reinforce positive behaviors in schools.
The effectiveness of PBIS has been researched extensively. Studies have shown that PBIS can have a positive impact on problem behavior by reducing vandalism (Mayer, 1995), aggression (Ross & Horner, 2009), office discipline referrals (Horner, Sugai, Smolkowski, Eber, Nakasato, Todd, & Esperanza, 2009), and antisocial behavior (Christensen, Young & Marchant, 2004; Bradshaw, Waasdorp, & Leaf, 2012). In addition, student perceptions of school climate and interactions have improved (McCurdy, Mannella, & Eldridge, 2003) and school staff members have reported improvements in perceptions of overall school climate (Bradshaw, et al., 2009). Teachers reported more time for teaching and more satisfaction in their work (Scott & Barrett, 2004).

**Statement of Problem**

Disruptive student behavior continues to be a significant concern among administrators, teachers, and parents (Skiba, 2008). Research has shown that traditional discipline policies such as suspension, expulsion, and ZT practices have failed to reduce disruptive behaviors in students (Skiba, 2008). Furthermore, traditional discipline policies have been shown to discriminate against students of color and those with disabilities. As schools nationwide search for alternative discipline policies, research needs to be conducted to gauge the effectiveness of these alternatives.

**Research Questions**

This study will attempt to find answers to the following questions:

R1. What are teachers’ experiences in implementing PBIS?
R2. How does PBIS improve school climate, student behavior, and student achievement?

R3. What are the limitations of PBIS and how may they be addressed?

**Significance of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to determine the perceptions and opinions of seventh and eighth-grade teachers regarding the implementation of PBIS. This study may reveal new information regarding the benefits and challenges of implementing PBIS from the perspective of the classroom teacher. In addition, the results of this study may provide useful information to administrators, teachers, parents and policy makers who are involved in making decisions regarding the implementation and management of PBIS and similar programs based on Restorative Justice philosophy.

**Limitations**

The following limitations will be considered when interpreting the results in this study. This study is limited to seventh and eighth-grade teachers employed by a rural K-12 unified school district located in the San Joaquin Valley of California. The current research will gather the perceptions of only one group, teachers, affected by the implementation of PBIS and, as such, can only reflect their experience. In addition, only three teachers will be interviewed and their perceptions will not be assumed to be representative of all staff. A further limitation to this study is that terms will not be defined prior to asking the participants questions. Specifically, school climate and classroom management will not be defined. Participants’ understanding of the terms is unknown and may differ between participants and this
researcher. The final limitation of this study is in terms of generalizability. The results will be informative for this particular study and not generalizable to other schools and implementations of PBIS.

**Definition of Terms**

Definitions of the following terms have been included to provide clarity for the reader in understanding the references used within this study:

*Zero Tolerance (ZT).* A policy of very strict, uncompromising enforcement of rules. The approach is intended to send the message that certain behaviors will not be tolerated on school grounds by punishing all offenses, major and minor, uniformly and severely (Skiba, 2000).

*Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS).* A decision-making framework that guides selection, integration and implementation of the best evidence-based behavioral practices for improving important behavior outcomes for all students.

*Restorative Justice.* A process where all stakeholders affected by an injustice have an opportunity to discuss how they have been affected by the injustice and decide what should be done to repair the harm.

**Summary**

An effective school discipline policy is crucial to the safety of students and establishing a positive school climate in which learning can take place. This study will investigate and determine the perceptions and opinions of seventh and eighth-
grade teachers regarding the implementation of PBIS and address its limitations.

Chapter 2 will present a review of the literature that is pertinent to this study.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Historically, school discipline traditionally was reactive as opposed to proactive. Suspensions and other forms of punitive and exclusionary discipline were viewed as necessary to maintain safety and order in schools (Wright, Morgan, Coyne, Beaver & Barnes, 2014). Reactive educators respond to inappropriate behavior by meting out punitive consequences. Punitive consequences can range from loss of privileges, in-school or out-of-school suspension, expulsion, and in some states, corporal punishment. Reactive responses to manage the inappropriate behavior of students continue to be the standard in schools across the country. Many teachers and administrators continue to rely on punitive consequences because it is easily administered (Maag, 2001). Reactive disciplinary strategies produce an immediate reduction in disruptive behavior, yet the reduction or extinction is usually only temporary with the behavior reoccurring at another time (Cohen, et al., 2007). Traditional discipline practices rely heavily on the use of negative consequences rather than creating an atmosphere that teaches and encourages positive behaviors and uses positive consequences for desired behaviors (Zaslaw, 2010).
**Zero Tolerance (ZT)**

School discipline problems have substantially changed through time. Disruptive behavior usually concerned talking without permission, being disruptive in class, running in the hallways, or smoking in the restroom. Dress code violations became a key discipline issue in the 1970s; in the 1980s, it was fighting among students. Gang activity entered schools during the late 1980s and into the 1990s. In addition, problems of weapons, substance abuse, and violent assaults against other students and school staff became more frequent. Some students carried firearms for protection (Allman & Slate, 2011). In response to the increased severity of school discipline problems, schools began adopting ZT policies, based on the philosophy that reacting to disruptions with strong force would deter other students from disruptive behavior (Skiba, 2014). In response to a public outcry for safe schools following Columbine and other tragedies, many schools adopted zero-tolerance policies to demonstrate their commitment to safety (Sailor, Stowe, Turnbull, & Kleinhammer-Tramill, 2007). Zero Tolerance (ZT) is a disciplinary approach intended to send the message that certain behaviors (e.g., drugs and weapons) will not be tolerated on school grounds by punishing all offenses, major and minor, uniformly and severely (Skiba, 2000). However, over time, schools began developing zero-tolerance policies across the country for behaviors such as tobacco use or possession, school disruption, and other less serious and less violent behaviors (Skiba & Peterson, 1999).
The implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) also played a key role in the continued development of ZT policies. The National Association of School Psychologists (2007) cited the NCLB requirement that states adopt a zero tolerance policy that empowers teachers to remove violent or persistently disruptive students from the classroom. This policy reflected an attempt to hold public schools across the United States accountable for safety (Byrd, 2001).

**Effects of Traditional Discipline Practices**

Traditional reactive discipline practices have been ineffective, fail to reduce problem behavior, and prevent efforts to establish a safe and orderly school environment (Lipsey & Wilson, 1993; Maag, 2001; Mayer, 1995; Noguera, 1995). After nearly two decades, there is little evidence that ZT policies have resulted in safer schools. No data exist to show that out-of-school suspensions and expulsions reduce disruption or improve school climate (Skiba, 2014). In addition, suspensions rates are moderately associated with lower graduation or higher dropout rates and greater contact with the juvenile justice system (Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2011). Schools with higher suspension and expulsion rates experience lower outcomes on statewide test scores, regardless of student demographics (Davis & Jordan, 1994).

Heilbrun, Cornell, and Lovegrove (2016) found that ZT discipline practices have been associated with a national increase in suspensions and suspension rates of Black students and more than double suspension rates for White students. Heilbrun et al. also found statistically significant differences in the types of offenses that resulted
in suspensions, with Black students significantly more likely to be suspended for disruptive offenses and White students more likely to be suspended for alcohol- and drug-related offenses.

Clearly, reactive discipline has had an unforeseen negative impact on students. Such an approach has not improved school safety or student behavior. Many schools in California are exploring alternative discipline practices that appear to have the potential to reduce school disruption and increase the safety of schools (Vancel, Missall, & Bruhn, 2016).

**Alternative Discipline Practices**

**Progressive Discipline**

Progressive discipline is a whole-school approach that utilizes a continuum of interventions, supports, and consequences to address inappropriate student behavior and to build upon strategies that promote positive behaviors such as self-control, trustworthiness, and empathy towards others. When inappropriate behavior occurs, disciplinary measures should be applied within a framework that shifts the focus from one that is solely punitive to one that is both corrective and supportive. Schools should utilize a range of interventions, supports, and consequences that include learning opportunities for reinforcing positive behavior while helping students to make good choices (Ryan & Ruddy, 2015).

**Restorative Justice**

First applied in the criminal justice system, the goal of restorative justice is to bring together victims and offenders to move them toward reconciliation and
restitution. Offenders are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions. In addition, restorative justice aims to help the offender avoid future offenses. The theory of restorative justice is naturally appealing to educators looking for alternatives to traditional discipline practices. Zaslaw (2010) described the approach as part of a healing and learning process that puts the responsibility on students to respond to wrongdoing. Relationships are formed through such a process and a strong sense of community and safety is fostered between the students and the faculty members.

When an incident occurs, the restorative model allows for all of the stakeholders in the school community, on both the side of the victim and that of the offender, to be treated equally and fairly, and for their feelings and opinions to be openly communicated. Thus the relationships that are necessary for students, teaching staff, administrators, support staff, and parents to work together in the future are more easily repaired (Ryan & Ruddy, 2015).

The use of restorative approaches, which focus on building, maintaining, and repairing relationships among all members of a school community, can produce good citizens (Martin, 2015). To build trust and relationships and to learn new behaviors takes time and practice. Acting with intention and empathy can be highly effective in supporting and empowering students and staff (Zaslaw, 2010).

**Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS)**

An outgrowth of applied behavior analysis, PBIS is a proactive approach to managing challenging behavior that emphasizes the readjustment of environments,
teaching of replacement behaviors, and manipulation of consequences to reduce or eliminate the targeted behaviors (Wheeler & Richey, 2005). PBIS differs from the traditional and punitive behavioral management strategies in terms of conditions, circumstances, and systems and the variables that impact behavior rather than just looking at the child (Wager, 1999).

Interventions based on this approach use a wide range of systemic and individualized strategies to manage disruptive behavior and promote safe and effective learning environments (Turnbull et al., 2002). School staff collaboratively establishes a set of positively stated behavioral expectations, which are taught to all students (Bradshaw et al., 2012)

**Summary of Studies**

Bradshaw et al. (2012) conducted a study to test the hypothesis that children in schools implementing Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) experience better adjustment and fewer problem behaviors relative to their peers in comparison schools. This study was conducted in 37 elementary schools in Maryland.

Data were collected using the Teacher Observation of Classroom Adaptation-Checklist (TOCA-C). Teachers completed a checklist for each student in their classroom. The TOCA-C measures each student’s level of aggressive and disruptive behaviors, concentration problems, prosocial behaviors, and emotion regulation. Teachers responded to each question using a 6-point Likert scale. Teachers completed a survey for each student in the class 5 times over the course of 4 years.
The authors conducted multilevel analyses on the teachers’ ratings of student behavior problems, concentration problems, social-emotional functioning, and prosocial behavior. Bradshaw et al. (2012) found significant effects ($p < .05$) of PBIS on student behavior, concentration, social-emotional functioning and prosocial behavior. Results indicated that students in PBIS schools had lower levels of aggressive and disruptive behaviors compared with those in the comparison schools. Similar effects on concentration problems, prosocial behavior and emotion regulation were observed. Students in the intervention had higher levels of positive behaviors and better emotion regulation than those in the control group.

Caldarella, Shatzer, Gray, Young, and Young (2011) conducted a study to test the hypothesis that PBIS shows improvement in school climate and student outcomes (behavior and grade point average) over time. This study was conducted in two middle schools (one treatment and one control) in the western United States.

Data were collected by having teachers complete two measures of school climate: the PBS-Supplemental Questionnaire (PBS-SQ) and the Indicators of School Quality (ISQ). The questionnaire contained 18 items, each with a 5-point Likert scale. The ISQ contained 30 items grouped into seven categories that assess school climate. In addition, during the four years of the PBIS intervention, school-wide data were collected at the treatment and control schools. These data included both academic (GPA) and student behavior (tardiness, unexcused absences, and office discipline referrals).
Caldarella et al. used an analysis of variance to determine if differences existed between the treatment school and the control school. Cohen’s $d$ was used to indicate the standardized difference between the means from the first year of the intervention with those of the final year. Data analyses showed statistically significant differences between the treatment school and the control school for student prosocial behavior, school communication/collaboration, and educational assistance as measured by the PBS-SQ and the ISQ. Statistically significant interaction effects were evident, indicating that the treatment school showed increases in measures of school climate while the control school did not. Analyses of student outcome data showed statistically significant decreases in student tardiness, unexcused absences, and office discipline referrals in the treatment school compared to the control school; however there was not a significant difference in student GPA between the two schools.

Bradshaw, Koth, Thornton, & Leaf (2009) conducted a study to examine the impact of PBIS training on improvements in school climate as measured by staff reports of the school’s organizational health as compared to schools that did not receive PBIS training. The authors used data from a 5-year group randomized controlled effectiveness trial of school-wide PBIS in elementary schools. Thirty-seven Maryland public elementary schools from five school districts volunteered to participate in the trial. Twenty-one schools were randomized to the intervention condition (PBIS) and 16
were assigned to the comparison condition. The comparison schools agreed to refrain from implementing PBIS for the duration of the study.

Bradshaw et al. (2009) collected data on organizational health using the Organizational Health Inventory for Elementary Schools (OHI; Hoy & Feldman, 1987). The OHI consists of 37 items that measure five aspects of a healthy functioning school: institutional integrity (the school’s ability to cope with outside forces, teachers are protected from unreasonable community and parent demands), staff affiliation (friendly interactions, commitment to students, trust among the staff, and sense of accomplishment), academic emphasis (students are cooperative in the classroom, respectful of students who get good grades, and are driven to improve their skills), collegial leadership (principal’s behavior is friendly, supportive, open, egalitarian, and neither directive nor restrictive), and resource influence (principal’s ability to lobby for resources for the school and positively influence the allocation of district resources).

The authors conducted longitudinal multilevel analyses on data collected from 2,596 staff and found that PBIS training was associated with significant positive intervention effects in resource influence, staff affiliation, academic emphasis and overall organizational health ($p < .05$) across the 4 years of the trial. There were no main effects of PBIS on institutional integrity and collegial leadership.

Vancel, et al. (2016) conducted a study to find out the extent to which social validity ratings of PBIS varied among teachers of different school levels and whether
specific teacher characteristics (e.g., gender) predicted higher social validity within each school level.

In 1978, Wolf described social validity as the value society places on a product. To fully analyze a program, Wolf suggested that society must evaluate its effectiveness based on goals, procedures, and outcomes. This information would lead to adjustments in the program to better meet the needs of the consumer. Vancel et al. (2016) applied Wolf’s theory in a school setting, with staff being the consumer and the PBIS framework as the product. In essence, they wanted to know to what extent teachers valued and agreed with the principles of PBIS, and whether or not there was a difference in how elementary, middle school, and high school teachers regarded the value of PBIS as a disciplinary framework. This study was conducted in 37 elementary, 14 middle, and 11 high schools in Iowa implementing PBIS. Three groups of teachers (elementary, middle, and high school teachers) completed the Iowa Social Validity Scale (ISVS; Vancel, Bruhn, & Missall, 2013), which is an 18-item rating scale with a 6-point Likert-type scale.

Vancel et al. (2016) found that there were statistically significant differences in social validity ratings of PBIS between the three groups of teachers. ($p < .0001$). Post hoc tests indicated high school teachers had significantly lower social validity ratings of PBIS than elementary ($p < .0001$) and middle school teachers ($p = .002$). The difference between the social validity ratings of elementary and middle school teachers was not statistically significant. Multiple regressions showed that the teacher characteristics of gender, age range, highest degree earned, number of years
of teaching experience, and number of years working at a PBIS school were not significant predictors of teacher social validity ratings of PBIS at the elementary, middle, or high school level.

A model of sustainability proposed by McIntosh, Horner, & Sugai (2009) hypothesized that four factors (priority, effectiveness, efficiency, and continuous regeneration) affect the sustainability of school-based interventions. McIntosh, Mercer, Hume, Frank, Turri, & Mathews (2013) conducted a study to identify which of those factors were most predictive of sustained implementation of PBIS. The authors collected data from participants in 14 states, representing all four regions of the United States Census Bureau, using the School-wide Universal Behavior Support Sustainability Index: School Teams (SUBSIST). This measure was intended to test and adapt existing sustainability theory and assess the relative importance of these factors when considered together, leading to identification of the most important variables to target to enhance sustainability.

Analyses were conducted using factor analysis and structural equation modeling in Mplus 6.1. The researchers found that of the four factors, continuous regeneration was the most significant predictor of sustainability ($p = .007$). Continuous regeneration includes school team effectiveness in the regular collection of implementation and outcome data and using it to adapt practices to make it more relevant, efficient, and effective. Continuous regeneration also includes building the capacity of school personnel to implement and adapt the program effectively (McIntosh et al., 2009). It is interesting to note that the commonly held idea that
school or district priority (administrator support, staff buy-in, integration into core components, and dedicated funding) is essential for sustainability was not fully supported. Neither made a significant independent contribution to sustained implementation.

**Summary**

This chapter explained the evolution of traditional discipline policies, identified alternative discipline policies, and provided a summary of the research on the effectiveness of these alternative discipline policies. Chapter III will describe the methodology of this study including the sample population, instrumentation, data collection, and qualitative analysis.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study is to determine the perceptions and opinions of seventh and eighth-grade teachers regarding Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). The following chapter will present the sample population, research questions, instrumentation and data collection, and data analysis.

Sample Population

The volunteer participants in this qualitative study were seventh and eighth-grade grade teachers employed by the same school located in the Central Valley of California. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants for this study. “The researcher selects participants on purpose because they are considered to be most appropriate for the study” (Clark & Creswell, 2015, p. 235). The participants were selected because of their teaching assignment at a new school that is implementing the PBIS framework. Their teaching experience ranges between 10 to 21 years. All three of the participants, their grade levels and years of experience as teachers are listed in Table 1. The names of these teachers and their school of employment will remain anonymous throughout this study.
Table 1

**Summary of Participant Specifics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Years of Teaching Experience</th>
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<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>8th grade English Language Arts</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>7/8th grade Mathematics</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>8th grade Mathematics</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Instrumentation and Data Collection**

Each participant was interviewed individually in order to maintain confidentiality and support an environment where each teacher responded without the presence of outside influences. The thesis committee chair approved the interview questions (See Appendix A), developed by this researcher. Letters of consent (See Appendix B) were distributed and signed in advance by the three teachers who participated in this study. The interview questions attempted to address the following research questions:

R1. What are teachers’ experiences in implementing PBIS?

R2. How does PBIS improve school climate, classroom practice and student achievement?

R3. What are the limitations of PBIS and how may they be addressed?

Participants were interviewed for approximately 45 minutes and were digitally recorded to secure and represent each response accurately. Notes were taken and
recorded by this researcher during the respective interview in order to document teacher reactions and observations. Individual teacher interview responses were transcribed upon the completion of the interview.

**Data Analysis**

After the transcription of the digitally recorded responses, the participants received copies to verify accuracy. All of the data collected were analyzed through color-coding. The evidence provided from the interviews, notes, reactions and observations were used to identify themes that addressed the three guiding research questions. References to each theme were noted by color. The results of this study were assembled and reported in the findings of this study. The Institutional Review Board of California State University, Stanislaus, approved the methodology for this research study (Protocol #1617-072, February 2, 2017). Written and electronic documents will be destroyed three years after the study is concluded to ensure the confidentiality of the participants.

**Summary**

Chapter III presented the methodology that includes the sample population, research questions, instrumentation and data collection and data analysis. Chapter IV will provide a summary of the data collected in relation to each research question.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to determine the perceptions and opinions of seventh and eighth-grade teachers regarding the effectiveness of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). This researcher interviewed three teachers at a junior high school in Central California to provide feedback on how they perceive the effectiveness of PBIS. This chapter provides a summary of the interviews as they relate to each research question.

Interviews

Interview 1

Alice is an English language arts teacher with ten years of teaching experience. Her experience includes teaching in a residential facility for troubled adolescents. She is currently working on a Master’s degree in reading.

Alice received one year of PBIS training through the Madera County Office of Education. She feels that emphasis on high behavioral expectations and the rewarding of positive behavior, which are hallmarks of the PBIS framework, have led to an improvement in classroom management. She reports that students seem more aware that making positive choices will have a positive effect on their futures. Alice stated that effective PBIS implementation heightens student awareness of how positive behaviors lead to improved academic achievement, necessary to reaching
their future goals. Also, she believes it is important to include students in the
development of schoolwide norms.

Alice reported that she has seen changes in school climate. Students are
exhibiting pride of ownership in their school by keeping the grounds free of litter.
She reported that the students are becoming more respectful to teachers and peers.
Students are actively trying to earn a higher GPA. The school offers a privilege card,
known as the Renaissance card, to students who earn an A or B average for the
trimester. In addition, students can earn a Renaissance card (Ren-Card) for
attendance and for improving their GPA, even if they have not yet achieved an A or B
average. Alice said that her students are very motivated to earn a Ren-Card. They
frequently check on their grades, ask how they can improve, and some meet with her
on Saturdays at Starbucks to work on improving their writing skills.

Alice stated that although the majority of her students are meeting school-
wide expectations, there are a few who are in need of more intensive support. She
feels that, for these students, there is often a delay in consequences and that the
consequences that are applied are not particularly effective in changing their
behavior.

Alice believes that professional development for PBIS can be improved by
providing a more in-depth presentation to teachers regarding the philosophy and
principles of the PBIS framework. She believes that teacher buy-in would be
enhanced if teachers had a better understanding of what PBIS attempts to accomplish.
Alice’s advice to make PBIS more effective is to provide more training, not only in philosophy and principles, but in strategies as well. She suggested including student representatives on the PBIS planning team and assigning teachers to a “squadron” that oversees the planning, implementation, and support for each of the schoolwide expectations.

**Interview 2**

Ben is a seventh-grade mathematics teacher with twenty-one years of teaching experience. He has a multiple subject credential, a special education credential, a single subject credential in mathematics, and an administrative services credential. He is a member of the school’s PBIS implementation team.

Ben went through one year of PBIS training through a County Office of Education. He noted that many of the PBIS strategies are consistent with the behavior management strategies that he learned through his special education training; therefore, PBIS training has not influenced his classroom management practices in any significant way. The school’s current effort at PBIS implementation has served to reinforce what Ben is doing in the classroom and helps him to remember effective strategies that he had forgotten or had not used in a while. He stated that the elements of effective PBIS training include, first and foremost, developing buy-in among the teachers. Additional elements include having clear goals and expectations, training for teachers in effective discipline strategies, and using various implementation models and guidelines.
Ben reported that he has seen changes in school climate. He notices more positive staff interactions with students. He observes that teachers are making more of an effort to be positive with the students, using more positive reinforcement and less negative consequences for misbehavior than he has seen in the past at the other junior high. He notices that many teachers are taking a step back when frustrated with student behavior and finding positive ways to handle it rather than immediately react negatively. Also, he observes, that while this is a new challenge for students, they are taking to it well and are more positive towards each other, citing fewer physical conflicts than in the past. When asked if PBIS has affected the academic achievement of his students, he replied, “Not yet”.

Ben stated that some students forget that they are still held accountable for their behaviors. In the midst of all the positive reinforcement, they are surprised when they receive unpleasant consequences for behaviors that are inappropriate. He stated that there are a number of students that do not respond to positive reinforcement and therefore PBIS does not work for them.

Ben had no opinion on how professional development for PBIS can be improved. His advice to make PBIS more effective is to get more staff involved. He stated that in his past experience, there was a tendency for the same small group people to be the ones to “do everything and then go out and ‘spread the word’ so to speak, which never happened.” He stated the rest of the staff was resentful because they were never included in the decision-making so they “were like, I don’t want to hear it from you, you know, and would shut them out.” Ben feels that implementation
will be more successful if most of the staff is involved in every aspect of the implementation. Additionally, Ben believes that the planning team needs to analyze student behaviors and look for trends in behaviors to better plan appropriate interventions.

**Interview 3**

Carl is an eighth-grade mathematics teacher with twenty-one years of experience in education. He served as an assistant principal for three years and principal for seven years in an elementary school. He holds a multiple subject credential and an administrative services credential.

Other than the staff meetings devoted to PBIS implementation, Carl has not had any professional development in PBIS. He has “caught bits and pieces from others who have.” What he knows of PBIS is that you have to be extremely positive. He likes the fact that the rules are clearly stated and if you consistently refer to and apply the rules, the kids “can’t really argue with you”. Carl stated that the elements of effective PBIS implementation include consistent positive reinforcement, allowing the students choice, and understanding the needs of the children.

Carl said that he has not seen any change in school climate due to his lack of experience with the PBIS principles; he is not sure what to look for. He believes that anything done with consistency will work, so he is sure that PBIS implementation will work if applied in a consistent matter, but he is not sure that all staff and students are “on board” with it. However, he has noticed some big changes in student behavior. “It eliminates the confrontation. I’ve been able to stay away from
confrontations with students by using positive language and reinforcement.” By using positive strategies and language, he is finding that the students are more cooperative in the classroom. Carl feels that, in some cases, PBIS has positively affected the academic achievement of the students. He stated that handling behaviors in a positive way puts students in a better frame of mind for learning. He feels that his students are doing better academically because they are not in a confrontational mode.

Carl stated that “…for some of them [students], it doesn’t matter what you do, they are going to be jerks because they just don’t care.” He feels that PBIS does not work for these students. Carl suggested that professional development could be improved with more hands-on training, lesson development for teaching student behaviors, opportunities to observe others, and coaching from experts in PBIS implementation. “It’s just like anything else we do. We’ve got to have the training piece, the practice part of it, …your independent practice, and coaching.” Carl’s advice for schools in making PBIS more effective is to make the needs of the children the first priority. Being consistent in implementation is extremely important. Also, he stated that having effective, dedicated leaders and effective teacher training on how it works in different classrooms or areas is essential. Teachers need to see it in action. Reading about it or hearing about it is not as effective as seeing it in practice and then trying it out and receiving coaching advice from a more experienced person. As a former principal, Carl understands the need for collecting and analyzing behavior data since the state has called for a reduction in suspensions. However, he stated that
simply reducing suspensions does not necessarily mean student behavior is improving. He expressed that there needs to be other methods of assessing improvements in student behavior but is not sure what those methods might be.

Summary

Chapter IV provided an analysis of the data collected in relation to each research question. Chapter V will provide a summary, themes and recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions and opinions of seventh and eighth-grade teachers regarding the effectiveness of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Concerns about discipline problems and violence in public schools have resulted in efforts to find effective methods to maintain safe school environments. One such method is Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS), which is an approach to discipline problems that school personnel are using in public schools throughout the United States. PBIS is a framework used by school staff to develop expectations and procedures to prevent and intervene. The goal of PBIS is to provide a positive school environment so that discipline problems decrease and student academic skills improve (Hoyle, Marshall, & Yell, 2011).

This chapter summarizes the information from Chapter IV and identifies themes based on responses to the research questions. In addition, this researcher will provide recommendations for further study.

Summary

This researcher prepared three research questions: (1) what are teachers’ experiences in implementing PBIS; (2) how does PBIS improve school climate, student behavior, and student achievement; and (3) what are the limitations of PBIS and how may they be addressed? The following paragraphs will summarize the findings of the three interviews constructed from each research question.
Two of the teachers interviewed received Tier 1 of PBIS training in the past. One teacher reported that he had no official PBIS training. His knowledge of PBIS implementation came through two staff meetings this year and “bits and pieces from others…”

All three teachers reported that the school’s current implementation of PBIS has led to improvements in their classroom management, albeit in different ways. Alice is focusing on encouraging academic excellence; Carl is practicing positive discourse with his students; and Ben has been reminded to use the positive behavior management strategies that he learned to use in his special education training. All three teachers felt that in-depth, comprehensive teacher training; clearly stated expectations; and consistency are essential elements of effective PBIS implementation.

Two of the three teachers interviewed reported seeing positive changes in school climate, student behavior and achievement. Students are more respectful of the staff and their peers; teachers are having more positive interactions with students both in and out of the classroom. The majority of the students are meeting school-wide behavioral expectations. The teacher who reported no change is not familiar enough with the principles of PBIS to make a determination of its effectiveness on school climate. All three teachers reported seeing improvements in student behavior. Students are more cooperative in class; they are responding positively to discipline; they are less confrontational with teachers; and one teacher has noticed fewer physical confrontations between students compared to last year.
Two of the teachers believe that PBIS has led to improvement in students’ academic success. The students are taking responsibility for their own success and showing more focus in class. Many students are actively trying to improve their grades by going to after school tutoring and meeting with teachers during break and at lunch to get extra help. Carl feels that because of the positive reinforcement advocated by PBIS, students are in a better frame of mind to learn.

All three teachers expressed that the current implementation of PBIS at the school does not address the needs of those students who are not responding to the school-wide behavioral intervention strategies. Two teachers felt that professional development could be improved by providing more in-depth training in principles, philosophy, and practice. One teacher had no opinion on improving professional development. While all three teachers cited adequate teacher training as essential to making PBIS implementation more effective in schools, each added interesting suggestions. Alice felt that including the students in the planning and implementation of the school-wide expectations and norms would improve effectiveness. She also suggested having teacher teams responsible for promoting each of the school’s expectations. This fits well with Ben’s suggestion of having more of the staff involved in the planning and implementation of PBIS. Finally, Carl suggested that understanding the needs of the students are important first steps to planning and implementing discipline practices and behavioral intervention.
Themes

The three teachers interviewed had different levels of professional development regarding PBIS and different experiences implementing PBIS principles. This researcher believes that while teachers may have a limited understanding of the guiding principles of PBIS, they are willing to implement positive practices as they understand them and are eager to receive more training to improve their practice.

The teachers felt that the current implementation of PBIS has a positive effect on school climate, student behavior, and student achievement. This researcher believes that teachers are encouraged by the positive behaviors they are noticing in their classrooms and on campus among the students and teachers. Even the response of “Not yet” when asked if PBIS had affected student achievement indicates a belief that eventually student achievement will improve.

All three teachers feel that the current implementation does not help those few students who are not responding well to positive reinforcement. This researcher believes that this is a sentiment shared by many teachers at the school. As the school’s PBIS team continues through the training cycle of the PBIS framework, strategies for meeting the needs of these students will be clarified and the staff will be involved in the implementation of secondary and tertiary intervention levels.

Those interviewed felt that adequate teacher training is essential to making PBIS implementation more effective in schools. Their additional suggestions lead this researcher to believe that teachers at the school are ready and willing to take a
more active role in the planning and implementation of PBIS. The PBIS team should take advantage of the benefits and explore ways to make implementation more inclusive of all staff.

**Implications**

The primary implication to emerge from this study is the need to provide on-going professional development and follow-up support. Secondly, the school should work with counselors, school psychologists, and other special service providers to develop secondary and tertiary interventions for those students who are not responding to the primary intervention level of PBIS. Finally, the school needs to determine what types of data to collect to evaluate the effectiveness of PBIS and to guide future implementation.

**Recommendations**

1. Replicate this study with teachers of non-core subjects.
2. Replicate this study with classified personnel.
3. Replicate this study with parents to gather their perceptions of discipline practices at the school.
4. Replicate this study with students to gather their perceptions of school climate.
REFERENCES


## APPENDIX A

### INTERVIEW QUESTION MATRIX

#### Preliminary Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1. Describe your level of familiarity with PBIS.</td>
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<tr>
<td>P2. Describe successful professional development.</td>
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<tr>
<td>P3. Describe, if any, a positive experience with PBIS prior to this school year.</td>
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<tr>
<td>P4. Describe, if any, a negative experience with PBIS prior to this school year.</td>
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#### Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R1. What are teachers’ experiences in implementing PBIS?</th>
<th>R1</th>
<th>R2</th>
<th>R3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Describe your professional development experiences for the implementation of PBIS.</td>
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<td>2. In what ways has PBIS influenced your classroom management practices?</td>
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<td>3. Identify the elements of effective PBIS implementation.</td>
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<td>R2. How does PBIS improve school climate, student behavior, and student achievement?</td>
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<td>4. Are there changes in school climate as a result of PBIS? Explain.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Have you noticed changes in your students’ behavior as a result of implementing PBIS? Elaborate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Do you believe that PBIS has affected the academic achievement of your students? Explain.</td>
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<tr>
<th>R3. What are the limitations of PBIS and how may they be addressed?</th>
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<tr>
<td>7. Describe negative factors associated with PBIS.</td>
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<td>8. How can professional development for PBIS be improved?</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. What advice would you give to schools to make PBIS more effective?</td>
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APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I am asking for your volunteer participation in a study that I am conducting as part of the fulfillment of my Master’s degree at California State University, Stanislaus. The purpose of this qualitative study is to determine the perceptions and opinions of seventh and eighth-grade teachers regarding Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).

As part of the data collection, I will ask questions regarding your experience with PBIS. Interviews will be done individually in order to maintain confidentiality and support a comfortable environment. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes of your time and you may withdraw or refuse to answer any question at any time without consequence. The interview will be audiotaped and transcribed to secure and represent your responses accurately. There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study. The information you provide will be protected from all inappropriate disclosure under the law. Your name and all other forms of identifiable information will not appear in this study.

The information that is gained will be used for educational purposes. Only this researcher will have access to the information collected that will be destroyed three years after the study. If you agree to participate, please sign below. If you have any questions about this research, please contact me, Melanie L. Martinez at (209) 585-8649 or my supervising professor, Dr. John Borba, at (209) 667-3260. If you have
any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the CSU Stanislaus Institutional Review Board at (209) 667-3493 and/or the Compliance Office at (209) 667-3351. By signing below, you agree that you have read the information described above and agree to participate in this study.

_____________________________  _________________________   ______
Name of Participant (Please print) Signature of Participant       Date