

A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY ON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' AND
TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF A SCHOOL-WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR
INTERVENTION AND SUPPORTS FRAMEWORK

by

H. David Cawthon

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this collective case study was to explore and understand administrators' and teachers' perceptions on how a school-wide positive behavior intervention and supports (SWPBIS) framework influences school climate at the elementary school level. The theory guiding this study was grounded in B.F. Skinner's theory of operant behavior and applied behavior analysis, which supports the use of positive reinforcement to increase desired behavior in a real world setting. A rich description of the perceived influence a SWPBIS framework has on school climate was constructed by answering the central research question: "How do administrators and teachers perceive the influence of a SWPBIS on school climate at the elementary school level?" Although numerous research studies regarding SWPBIS have been conducted, few have addressed the perceptions of administrators and teachers. Participants included 37 administrators, teachers, and school personnel from 3 north Georgia elementary schools within the same district that had implemented SWPBIS. Data was collected during face-to-face interviews, focus group sessions, and from relevant documentation to increase trustworthiness through triangulation. Results of the present study demonstrate that administrators and teachers believe SWPBIS has positively changed the mindset and behaviors of students, teachers, and administrators resulting in a healthier school climate. Implications of the study include measures for central office personnel in making implementation decisions, measures for school administrators to increase buy-in, and measures for teachers to choose specific features to maximize the success of SWPBIS.

Keywords: applied behavior analysis, school climate, operant behaviorism, reinforcers, school-wide positive behavior interventions and supports (SWPBIS)

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife Suni, who has been my biggest encourager and greatest supporter during this journey. Without her steadfast love, support, and encouragement I could have never achieved this accomplishment. You have toted the “rock” during this adventure and I know at times it got very heavy. But, you never wavered and remained strong as you stood in the gap while I was studying, researching, and writing. Your love and faith in me make me feel like I can accomplish anything. There is no one else that I would rather do life with than you. I also dedicate this dissertation to my two wide-open sons, Jake and Seth. Thanks for being the “men of the house” while I was working on “school stuff.” My prayer is that you will pursue God and use the gifts that He has given you with intensity to accomplish His will and make a difference in the lives of others. Finally, this dissertation is dedicated in memory of Ilon Coker. He showed me how to lead a life pleasing to God, the value of family, the rewards of hard work, and how to laugh. His legacy lives on through me and I pray that I can pass on what he has taught me to my boys.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	3
Dedication	4
Acknowledgments	5
List of Abbreviations	10
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	11
Overview	11
Background	12
Situation to Self	14
Problem Statement	15
Purpose Statement	16
Significance of the Study	16
Research Questions	18
Central Question	19
Subquestions	19
Research Plan	21
Delimitations and Limitations	21
Summary	22
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	24
Overview	24
Theoretical Framework	25
Operant Behavior	25

Applied Behavior Analysis	29
Related Literature.....	31
Issues of School Discipline	31
Historical Development of PBIS.....	35
SWPBIS Implementation	39
Effectiveness of SWPBIS.....	44
School Climate	48
Teachers' Perceptions	50
Administrators' Perceptions.....	55
Summary.....	57
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS.....	59
Overview.....	59
Design	59
Research Questions.....	61
Central Question.....	61
Subquestions.....	61
Setting	61
Participants.....	64
Procedures.....	65
The Researcher's Role	66
Data Collection	67
Documents.....	68
Interviews	68
Focus Groups.....	72

Data Analysis	75
Trustworthiness	76
Credibility.....	77
Dependability	77
Transferability	78
Ethical Considerations	78
Summary	79
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS.....	80
Overview	80
Participants.....	81
Results.....	97
Theme Identification	98
Recurring Themes	99
Research Question Results	138
Summary	142
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	144
Overview.....	144
Summary of Findings.....	144
Central Question Findings.....	146
Subquestion 1 Findings	147
Subquestion 2 Findings	147
Subquestion 3 Findings	148
Subquestion 4 Findings	148
Discussion	149

Discussion of the Theoretical Framework	149
Discussion of the Related Literature	151
Implications.....	155
Theoretical Implications.....	155
Empirical Implications	156
Practical Implications	157
Limitations	160
Recommendations for Future Research	161
Summary	162
REFERENCES	164
APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER	179
APPENDIX B: IRB SUPERINTENDENT PERMISSION REQUEST LETTER	180
APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM	181
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	184
APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FORM.....	185
APPENDIX F: FOCUS GROUP QUESTONS	186
APPENDIX G: FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL FORM.....	187
APPENDIX H: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION.....	188
APPENDIX I: CODE FREQUENCY CHART	191
APPENDIX J: CODE CLASSIFICATION CHART	192
APPENDIX K: SUB-THEME CLASSIFICATION CHART	193
APPENDIX L: TRANSCRIBER CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT	195

List of Abbreviations

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)

Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE)

Mount Vernon School System (MVSS)

Nelson Elementary School (NES)

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

Potomac Elementary School (PES)

PBIS National Technical Assistance Center (TA Center)

School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS)

Washington Elementary School (WES)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

In the United States of America educators are faced with increasingly difficult tasks and responsibilities as the student population becomes more diverse and the performance standards become more rigorous (Fitzgerald, Geraci, & Swanson, 2014). Schools are mandated to improve literacy, enhance student character, and ensure that all students achieve higher levels of academic achievement, but with fewer resources (Hanson, Labat, & Labat, 2014). One of the main obstacles is that students are entering school with different perspectives on how to behave in social and institutional settings. There are a myriad of reasons for the differing perspectives, such as changing family structure, lack of parental support, or cultural norms. For schools to meet rigorous performance standards set out by federal, state, and local agencies, students and other stakeholders need to conduct themselves in an appropriate and positive manner (Hanson et al., 2014; Luiselli, Putnam, & Handler, 2001). To meet this challenge, schools are implementing programs that systematically manage student behavior problems by creating school wide plans that clearly articulate positive behavior expectations, provide incentives to students who meet those behavioral expectations, and establish a consistent strategy for managing student behavioral problems (Bradshaw, Mitchell, & Leaf, 2010). By adopting a proactive framework, schools are striving to reduce negative behaviors and teach students to make positive choices that will maximize instructional time and foster a healthy school climate.

The purpose of this collective case study is to explore and understand administrators' and teachers' perceptions on how a school-wide positive behavior intervention and supports (SWPBIS) framework influences school climate at the elementary school level. Exploring the perceptions of administrators and teachers is crucial for gaining a comprehensive understanding

of the influence SWPBIS has on school climate at the elementary school level. A collective case study design is utilized because it allows investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within a real world setting (Yin, 2014).

This chapter introduces and discusses important information pertaining to the collective case study. The subsections in this chapter include the background to the study, situation to self, problem and purpose statements, significance of the study, and the research question and subquestions. This chapter also discusses the research plan, delimitations, and limitations of the research study.

Background

Schools are now being challenged to transform to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse classroom (Lane, Jolivette, Conroy, Nelson, & Benner, 2011; Safran & Oswald, 2003; Sugai & Horner, 2006). Classrooms across the United States have students with different backgrounds, experiences, and learning. A factory or one-size fits all educational model will not adequately assess the needs of all learners. This is not only true for academics, but for discipline as well. Fortunately, educational research has made important advances in defining practices that are effective, or evidence-based, for improving students' academic and social outcomes (Coffey & Horner, 2012).

Changing family structures, community disorganization, increase in drug use, growth in alcohol abuse, and escalation in violence have put students at greater risk of developing emotional and behavioral problems (Fitzgerald et al., 2014). An increasing number of students are entering schools with emotional and behavioral problems, and the schools are accountable for ensuring each student is provided with the highest quality educational experience to be successful (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). Another complication is that, owing to financial restraints,

schools are faced with larger class sizes, which lead to further behavioral problems (Chingos, 2013). The economic recession has negatively affected school districts by reducing the number of teachers, resources, and opportunities within schools (Chingos, 2013).

Research has proven that preventing disruptive behavior, rather than reacting to it, provides the most efficient and effective system of behavior management and serves to provide a solid foundation for safe and healthy schools (Fitzgerald et al., 2014; Lewis & Sugai, 1999; Muscott, Mann, Benjamin, Gately, Bell, & Muscott, 2004; Skiba & Peterson, 2000). More schools are implementing school-wide positive behavior interventions and supports framework, also known as SWPBIS, to teach students appropriate and constructive behaviors to replace negative behaviors. SWPBIS is an evidence-based, data-driven framework proven to reduce disciplinary incidents, increase a school's sense of safety, improve school climate, and support improved academic outcomes for all students (Fitzgerald et al., 2014). SWPBIS is an alternative to the traditional response of zero-tolerance that focuses on strict rules and policies and calls for measures that are more reactive. Instead, SWPBIS is proactive, it teaches and reinforces positive behavior, and increases and protects instructional time (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, & Leaf, 2012; Pinkelman, McIntosh, Rasplica, Berg, & Strickland-Cohen, 2015).

Schools implementing SWPBIS with commitment have noted positive increases in their overall school climate (Fallon, O'Keeffe, & Sugai, 2012). A healthy school climate leads to increased student outcomes including higher grades, standardized test scores, and reading levels, as well as positive increases in attendance and overall school adjustment (Caldarella, Shatzer, Gray, Young, & Young, 2011). School climate refers to the quality and character of school life. The foundation for the school climate is a combination of students, parents, and school personnel's experiences of school life. Therefore, school climate reflects the norms, goals,

values, and organizational structures as perceived by the stakeholders (National School Climate Center, 2015). Stakeholder perceptions are shaped by their experiences of school life, which consists of interpersonal interactions, teaching, and learning practices in the school environment (National School Climate Center, 2015). By the implementation of a SWPBIS framework, students and faculty members learn constructive behaviors to build relationships that foster a positive school climate.

Situation to Self

During my time in public education, I have had the opportunity to teach in different school districts, grade levels, and subject areas. I taught seventh grade world history in a suburban setting my first year after graduating from the University of Georgia. The following year, I taught social studies courses at a small, rural high school in another district for three years. Then I had an opportunity to teach in a larger, rural high school for eight years. During that time, I taught co-taught courses, regular courses, and Advanced Placement courses. The last three years I have served as an assistant principal at a rural elementary school.

During my years in the classroom, I continuously sought to create a constructive and positive learning environment. I established clear and attainable expectations and policies that my students could adhere to and understand. However, there was not a school-wide behavior framework established and each teacher created their individualized classroom behavior plans. The expectations of students were not consistent throughout the schools and this made it difficult for them to follow as they changed classes. I often thought that creating and implementing a school-wide behavior framework would be beneficial to the students, teachers, and administrators.

As an assistant principal, one of my main responsibilities is to oversee discipline. Being an administrator has allowed me to view behavior and the teacher's role from another perspective. In my experience, schools are reactive and punitive and lack the process of adequately educating students on appropriate, desired behaviors. I would like to see a more balanced approach to discipline that is research based but customizable to meet the needs of individual schools. Therefore, my paradigm in the present research study is social constructivism, where I want to gain insight into understanding how one's own experiences and background affects what one understands and how one behaves in a school that has implemented SWPBIS (Patton, 2002). The research study was conducted in a school district approximately 70 miles from my place of employment and I do not have any relationship with any of the schools who participated in the study.

Problem Statement

Research has shown that staff commitment and buy-in are essential features to successful implementation of a SWPBIS framework (Coffey & Horner, 2012; George, White, & Schlaffer, 2007; McIntosh, Kim, Mercer, Strickland-Cohen, & Horner, 2014; Nocera, Whitbread, & Nocera, 2014). However, the feature that has the greatest impact on school personnel perceptions of SWPBIS is perceived administrative support (Matthews, McIntosh, Frank, & May, 2014; Nocera et al., 2014). A noted problem is in discrepancies between researchers' and school personnel's perceptions of a SWPBIS (McIntosh, Predy, et al., 2014), thereby inferring there are also discrepancies between the perceptions of administrators and teachers regarding SWPBIS. Another problem is that the majority of research and emphasis regarding SWPBIS has been placed on student outcomes, system processes, and structures to support teacher implementation (Horner, Sugai, & Anderson, 2010; Ross, Romer, & Horner, 2012; Sugai, Horner, Fixen, &

Blasé, 2010). Landers (2006) recommended future research utilize case study methods to examine stakeholders' perceptions of a SWPBIS framework. Collier and Henriksen (2012) emphasized that qualitative data, such as teachers' perceptions, offers a kaleidoscope of rich information regarding factors that can promote or hinder success of a behavioral prevention program, which could otherwise be missed by quantitative evaluation. Therefore, exploring the perceptions of administrators and teachers is crucial to gaining a comprehensive understanding of the influence SWPBIS has on school climate at the elementary school level.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this collective case study was to explore and understand administrators' and teachers' perceptions on how a SWPBIS framework influences school climate at the elementary school level. During the collective case study, administrator and teacher perception was generally defined as their way of discerning, understanding, or interpreting a systematic approach designed to prevent negative behaviors detrimental to student success by establishing a positive school climate to promote better educational outcomes for all students.

Significance of the Study

The collective case study will contribute to the body of literature regarding administrators' and teachers' perceptions of a SWPBIS framework. The majority of literature regarding SWPBIS is quantitative and focuses on student outcomes and the implementation process (Horner et al., 2010; Ross et al., 2012; Sugai et al., 2010). Therefore, this research study will fill in the gaps in the literature by providing qualitative data that emphasizes the perceptions of administrators and teachers on the influence a SWPBIS framework has on school climate.

The collective case study will provide data that is valuable to different stakeholders in the educational system. Results from the study may help guide school districts or individual schools in their decision making processes to implement SWPBIS. Central office personnel and board of education members would have qualitative data describing the influence of SWPBIS from the perceptions of administrators and teachers. This data could be useful in identifying specific areas of concern that would need to be addressed to have an effective and efficient implementation process. It could also help identify effective features of SWPBIS that increase administrator and teacher buy-in and support, which could positively affect sustainability. The findings of the present research study could enable school districts to make their SWPBIS more efficient and effective, thus saving time, money, and frustration.

Understanding teachers' perceptions and the influence SWPBIS has on school climate would be beneficial to administrators. By understanding teachers' perceptions, administrators could develop or revise specific components of SWPBIS to improve the process and positively influence the school climate. Examining teachers' perceptions will shed light on factors that promote and hinder program implementation and sustainability (Collier & Henriksen, 2012). It would also allow for the voices of teachers to be communicated and included in the decision making processes regarding the SWPBIS framework. Teachers could benefit from the data of the collective case study by understanding the strengths and weaknesses of a SWPBIS framework from another teacher's perspective. This would give teachers a deeper understanding of a SWPBIS framework, thus allowing them to be more receptive to implementation. A deeper understanding of a SWPBIS framework has the potential to increase teacher support, thereby resulting in greater implementation fidelity (Pinkelman et al., 2015). Teachers would also gain

valuable information regarding the positive and negative influences that certain features of a SWPBIS framework may have on the school climate.

Research Questions

Research has indicated that being proactive and preventing disruptive behaviors instead of simply reacting to such behaviors provides the most efficient and effective behavior management system (Fitzgerald, Geraci, & Swanson, 2014; Lassen, Steele, & Sailor, 2006; Lewis & Sugai, 1999; Sharkey & Fenning, 2012; Skiba & Peterson, 2000). Administrator and teacher buy-in are important factors for the successful implementation and sustainability of SWPBIS (Pinkelman et al., 2015). School personnel are critical in the implementation of SWPBIS, therefore understanding their perceptions and beliefs are vital to enhancing sustainability (McIntosh, Kim, et al., 2014). The purpose of the present collective case study is to explore and understand administrators' and teachers' perceptions on how a SWPBIS framework influences school climate at the elementary school level. Specifically, the study seeks to gain a greater understanding of what administrators and teachers perceive as positive and negative factors of SWPBIS and its influences on the relationships of students and school staff. Research exists regarding the effectiveness of SWPBIS on increasing the frequency of desired behaviors, improving student achievements, and reducing negative actions that result in office disciplinary referrals (Fitzgerald et al., 2014; Flannery, Fenning, McGrath, & McIntosh, 2014; McIntosh, Kim, et al., 2014; Nocera et al., 2014). However, there is a lack of qualitative data examining the perceptions of administrators and teachers of SWPBIS (Horner et al., 2010; Ross et al., 2012; Sugai et al., 2010). The following questions will guide this research study:

Central Question

How do administrators and teachers perceive the influence of SWPBIS on school climate at the elementary school level? Linking current studies to the effectiveness of SWPBIS, this question seeks to examine the influence of SWPBIS on school climate from the perspective of administrators and teachers. A SWPBIS framework aims to reduce discipline problems, thereby improving relationships between stakeholders and increasing exposure to classroom instruction (Gage, Sugai, Lewis, & Brzozowy, 2015). Factors such as discipline, absences, and academic achievement influence how teachers perceive and rate school climate (Caldarella et al., 2011; Taylor, West, & Smith, 2006; Urick & Bowers, 2011). This question extends beyond the impact that SWPBIS has on behavior and academics to investigate how the culmination of positive and negative factors influence school climate.

Subquestions

1. *What features of SWPBIS are perceived as having a positive influence on school climate at the elementary school level?* Reinforcements are designed to strengthen responses and influence the rate that students respond to specific reinforcers (Skinner, 1963). Using operant conditioning and applied behavior analysis (ABA) as theoretical frameworks in the study, this question seeks to understand the policies and reinforcers utilized in SWPBIS that influence the frequency of positive behaviors, which result in a more positive, healthy school climate.
2. *What factors of SWPBIS are perceived as having a negative influence on school climate at the elementary school level?* Research and current literature have linked certain disciplinary policies with an increase in negative behaviors. Certain consequences and

punishments have been proven to have an adverse effect, resulting in the desired behavior being suppressed (Bouton & Schepers, 2015). The goal of a SWPBIS framework is to support pro-social behaviors while decreasing anti-social behaviors (Hanson et al., 2014). This subquestion seeks to identify possible factors of SWPBIS that may lead to a decline in school climate.

3. *How has SWPBIS influenced relationships among students and adults in the elementary school?* Positive and negative reinforcers within a school environment help shape the relationships between students, teachers, administrators, and other school stakeholders. To develop and maintain healthy relationships among students and adults in a school environment, the school's beliefs, expectations, and policies must be clearly understood by the stakeholders (Osman, 2012). The patterns of norms, goals, values, and interactions that shape relationships in schools are an essential component of school climate (Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D'Alessandro et al., 2013). This question seeks to understand how implementing a SWPBIS framework has, if any, influenced the relationships between students and adults in the school.
4. *What are the differences in perceptions between administrators and teachers of SWPBIS at the elementary school level?* Individuals within a school may have differing perceptions of the school's health and climate because of their specific roles and experiences (Booren, Hardy, & Power, 2011). The school context and school roles where teachers and administrators work heavily influence their perceptions (Urlick & Bowers, 2011). Given that the school context and school roles are different for administrators and teachers, it is possible that their perceptions will be different. Therefore, this subquestion

seeks to identify and understand how administrators and teachers perceive the effectiveness of SWPBIS.

Research Plan

The collective case study followed a qualitative research design. Interviews and focus groups were conducted to collect data and relevant documentation and artifacts were collected and analyzed. The qualitative findings from the research study sought to illuminate personnel involved in SWPBIS implementation to gain a deeper understanding of their perceptions (Patton, 2002) of its influence on school climate. A qualitative design allows the researcher to collect and analyze data, and interpret phenomena in a natural setting (Creswell, 2013). A qualitative research design and methodology is appropriate for the present collective case study because the data collected is rich in descriptions of people, places, and phenomena that are not easily handled by statistical procedures (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

A collective case study design was utilized to understand the perceptions of elementary school administrators and teachers of a SWPBIS framework. A collective case study design is appropriate because it allows an in depth investigation of a contemporary phenomenon of SWPBIS within a real world setting (Yin, 2014). The study included multiple elementary schools within one district and is bounded by geographic location, time, and educational level.

Delimitations and Limitations

The delimitations of the collective case study include the setting, the selection of participants, and the phenomenon of the study. The setting of the school district was selected based on its decision to implement SWPBIS in each of the elementary schools operating within its authority. The administrators selected for interviews were determined based on their

responsibility to oversee discipline and the teachers were interviewed based on their homeroom grade level. The focus groups were selected because of their participation in their school's SWPBIS team. Another delimitation of the study is the choice of the researcher to explore the perceptions of administrators and teachers of SWPBIS, rather than the process of implementation or student achievement.

One limitation to this study is the possibility that administrators and teachers may not fully disclose their honest perceptions of a SWPBIS framework. The participants may also harbor personal feelings concerning SWPBIS, but the researcher does not have control of staff biases for or against a SWPBIS framework. Another limitation to the study is the use of a human instrument to conduct interviews with administrators and teachers (Patton, 2002). However, the researcher worked carefully and diligently to conduct interviews that followed protocols to ensure responses were not influenced. Finally, there is a lack of generalizability of the results (Yin, 2014) because it focuses primarily on elementary school administrators and teachers in a north Georgia school district. The scope of the study focuses on a specific demographic and geographical area between kindergarten and fifth grade level ranges. Within the school system and participants of the collective case study there is a lack of diversity. The findings could be beneficial to other school systems; however, owing to location, socio-economic status, and other factors generalizability will be limited.

Summary

The first chapter has presented an introduction to the collective case research study. An overview of the relevant literature illustrated the increase of schools that are implementing SWPBIS and gaps in the existing literature were revealed. The researcher's motivation for conducting the research, relationship to the participants, and paradigm was articulated. In

Chapter Two, an extensive review of the literature provides an underpinning for the collective case study. Chapter Three provides the research design, methods of data collection, and data analysis procedures of the collective case study. The findings of the research study are presented in Chapter Four. Chapter Five concludes the research study, with the findings being interpreted and discussed. In Chapter Five, recommendations for future research are addressed to help researchers build on existing findings and contribute to the body of literature regarding the impact of a SWPBIS framework on school climate at the elementary school level.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The purpose of this collective case study is to explore and understand administrators' and teachers' perceptions on how a SWPBIS framework influences school climate at the elementary school level. This will be accomplished through a collective case study of three elementary schools that have implemented SWPBIS. The present study will provide qualitative data revealing how administrators and teachers perceive the influence of SWPBIS on school climate and how school climate has changed owing to SWPBIS implementation. Schools are searching for evidence based behavior programs to address challenging behaviors, increase positive social interactions, and promote a healthy environment that is conducive to learning to ensure students' academic, social, and behavioral success.

The purpose of Chapter Two of this collective case study is to provide a theoretical framework for the study and review of relevant literature pertaining to administrators' and teachers' perception of SWPBIS and its influence on school climate. The study is grounded in B. F. Skinner's theory of operant behavior and ABA, which has a foundation in behaviorism (Hanson et al., 2014). The theoretical framework applies to behavior and the role of using reinforcers to increase desired behavior (Moore, 2011) with the aim of improving socially important issues in a real world setting (Baer, Wolf, & Risley, 1968). The relevant literature denotes the issues regarding school discipline and the historical development of SWPBIS. The literature review also examines the implementation and impact of SWPBIS, focusing on school climate in particular. Administrator and teacher perspectives are examined to determine their significance on SWPBIS and the influence on school climate concludes the review of the literature.

Theoretical Framework

The actions and behaviors of students within the school environment positively or negatively affect the overall perception of school climate (Booren et al., 2011). Schools and teachers have specific academic standards, required by state or federal legislation, which must be taught to students (Chingos, 2013; Ross et al., 2012). It is imperative that students display positive behaviors to protect instructional time to reach such rigorous standards and expectations. Exhibiting positive behaviors is also a key ingredient in creating a healthy school climate. Having a healthy school climate and protecting instructional time will increase the chances of students achieving social and academic success (Booren et al., 2011; Thapa et al., 2013). A growing number of students are arriving at school with a lack of social skills, limited understanding of appropriate behavior, and a diminished value of others (Fitzgerald et al., 2014; Lewis & Sugai, 1999). Therefore, it is becoming increasingly more important that students learn behaviors and skills that will not only help them be successful in school but life in general.

Operant Behavior

It is important to understand the foundation and underpinnings of SWPBIS to comprehend its purpose and key characteristics. Utilizing B. F. Skinner's theory of operant behavior (Byrne, 2006), which is rooted in behaviorism, a framework for the present research study will be developed that will explain the rationale and the functions of a SWPBIS framework (Hanson et al., 2014). In addition, the theoretical framework of operant behavior will deepen the understanding of the actions of teachers and administrators in a sustained SWPBIS program. The behavior of the students, teachers, and administrators affects the perception of SWPBIS and its influence on school climate.

Behaviorism is a science of human behavior that organizes laws and principles in ways that describe the relationship between observable occurrences and the contextual or environmental contingencies that are functionally related to those occurrences (Sugai, 2007). Behaviorists look at antecedent events in the environment and take into account environmental history in attempts to make connections that explain behavior (Skinner, 1985). To help make those connections and develop theories, behaviorists apply the principles and methods of other natural sciences (Moore, 2011). Behaviorism specifies that individuals will interact and respond to their environmental circumstances based on what they deem appropriate and beneficial (Farmer, Reinke, & Brooks, 2014; Moore, 2011). Over time, an individual's environmental circumstances will influence their actions (Malone, 2003) and they will develop learned behaviors. Through the lens of behaviorism, B. F. Skinner formulated the theory of operant behavior (Hanson et al., 2014).

In the 1930s, B.F. Skinner developed what he called operant behavior to reflect the fact that the animal “operated” on the environment to produce a reward (Byrne, 2006; Staddon, & Cerutti, 2003). When behaviors are followed by a reinforcer, it increases the frequency of the behavior and behaviors that are not followed by a reinforcer decrease in frequency (Byrne, 2006; Trask & Bouton, 2014). The same principles that were applied to animals can be transferred to humans to explain their interactions with the environment. Operant conditioning is related to school behavior as teachers and administrators strive to increase positive behaviors and decrease negative behaviors. A student's behavior will operate upon the environment to generate consequences (Delprato & Midgley, 1992); therefore, the reinforcers must be carefully designed to promote the desired behavior. The clarification of the relationship between behavior and its

consequences through operant behavior (Skinner, 1963) can increase the efficiency and effectiveness of a school-wide behavior plan.

Operant reinforcement is traced to most behaviors (Skinner, 1988) and requires individuals to select consequences based on their interactions with their environment. The behaviors an individual selects will be determined by reinforcers. A reinforcer is a consequence of a response that increases and strengthens the probability of the response (Farmer et al., 2014; Moore, 2011). Extrinsic factors, such as positive reinforcers and negative consequences, are utilized to control the probability of a desired behavior (Hanson et al., 2014). In an educational setting, the student who is consistently being reinforced for appropriate behavior will increase the appropriate behavior (Wheatley et al., 2009). Behavioral expectations and reinforcers can be applied to all students in all settings (Boneshefski & Runge, 2014), thereby affecting school-wide behavior.

Skinner's operant theory was influenced by Thorndike's Law of Effect, which made it possible to include the effects of actions among the causes of future action without using concepts such as purpose, intention, or utility (Skinner, 1963). There are two main types of reinforcements utilized in influencing an individual's behavior. The first type is called positive reinforcers. Positive reinforcers produce certain stimulus events and as a result, the operants increase in frequency (Bijou & Baer, 1961). The second type is called negative reinforcers. Negative reinforcers remove, avoid, or terminate certain other stimulus events and as a result, the operants increase in frequency (Bijou & Baer, 1961). Therefore, as teachers and administrators develop and revise behavior policies, operant consequences must be utilized and implemented to reinforce each other to teach students the desired behaviors.

An individual's environment is an extraordinarily complex set of positive and negative reinforcing contingencies (Skinner, 1958). A student's school environment consists of rewards and punishments that affect their interactions with their friends, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. If positive reinforcers are being consistently delivered when students exhibit the desired behavior, then over time the student will more than likely understand the function of the positive behavior (Betts, Hill, & Surface, 2014). Understanding the function, rationale, and benefits of a positive behavior will lead to students being intentional to exhibit that positive behavior and over time, it could become a natural behavior.

Operant reinforcement is a key factor towards influencing an individual's behavior (Moore, 2011). A behavior will increase if it produces a consequence that the individual desires. On the other hand, the behavior will decrease if the exhibited behavior results in a consequence that the individual deems negative, whether it is the loss of privileges or the addition of an adverse experience. However, the promptness or timing with which an operant has consequences can be as important as the consequences themselves (Bijou & Baer, 1961). When a response is given immediately after an operant then the reinforcer is more effective (Betts et al., 2014; Bijou & Baer, 1961) and the change in behavior is stronger. If the reinforcer is delayed or becomes extinct, the students will unlearn the desired behavior (Bouton & Schepers, 2015) and the problem behaviors will increase in frequency. One of the primary goals of SWPBIS is to replace negative behaviors by teaching positive behaviors and establishing an environment where positive behaviors increase in frequency (Sugai & Horner, 2006).

A SWPBIS framework has its ancestry in behavioral theory, operant behavior, and ABA (Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010). The influence of behaviorism and operant behavior is apparent by the aim of SWPBIS to improve quality of life by reducing problem behaviors that

are barriers to a high quality of life and improving adaptive, prosocial behaviors that are critical for realizing a satisfying quality of life (Dunlap, Kincaid, Horner, Knoster, & Bradshaw, 2014). To achieve this goal, SWPBIS incorporates reinforcers that are rooted in operant conditioning. Operant conditioning uses extrinsic factors, such as positive and negative consequences, to control the probability of a desired behavior (Hanson et al., 2014). In a SWPBIS program, positive and negative reinforcers can be utilized in various ways depending on the needs of each individual school.

Applied Behavior Analysis

Applied behavior analysis, also referred to as ABA, has evolved over time (Morris, Altus, & Smith, 2013), but extends behaviorism by emphasizing the application of behavioral principles to applied problems (Sugai, 2007). ABA seeks to apply the principles of operant psychology to problems that are considered socially important (Carr et al., 2002) in an effort to improve individual's behavior and interaction with the environment. ABA emphasizes that human behavior is learned, is lawful in its relationship with the environment, and is modifiable through environmental adjustments (Sugai, O'Keefe, & Fallon, 2012). ABA's conceptual foundation is based on Skinner's operant behavior and emphasizes the principles of reinforcement, contingency management and stimulus control (Dunlap, Carr, Horner, Zarcone, & Schwartz, 2008; Morris, Smith, & Altus, 2005). ABA is filled with creative applications of basic behavioral principles that have helped people to enhance the quality of their lives (Gambrill, 2012). Schools implementing SWPBIS seek to apply these same principles to create a healthy school climate that promotes social and academic success.

The technology of ABA involves reinforcement and contingency management, functional assessment, generalization, and manipulations of stimulus (Carr et al., 2002; Dunlap et al., 2008). ABA includes attention to environmental influences (Gambrill, 2012) and evaluating the changes that occur in behavior that are caused by the process of analytic behavioral application (Baer et al., 1968). In the systematic application of ABA, the reinforcer is consistently applied toward specific student outcomes (Cooper, 1982). The specific student outcome that is being reinforced will result in the desired behavior occurring more frequently and in an appropriate setting. The SWPBIS reinforcers that are built on the foundation of ABA provide a more positive, collaborative, and holistic framework (Safran & Oswald, 2003) that will be beneficial to the school climate by preventing challenging behavior (Tincani, 2007).

ABA contributes to the theory of positive behavior support by providing the theoretical and methodological framework for behavioral change (Dunlap et al., 2014; Hanson et al., 2014; Johnston, Foxx, Jacobson, Green, & Mulick, 2006) and focuses on positive reinforcement to support a student's performance in socially desirable target behaviors (Solomon, Klein, Hintze, Cressey, & Peller, 2012). SWPBIS emphasizes the application of evidence-based behavioral technologies in the larger context and is guided by the tenets of prevention, theoretically sound practice, and systems implementation (Sugai & Horner, 2006). A SWPBIS framework applies a functional analysis to a natural school setting that emphasizes a lifestyle focus and social change to improve the quality of the school climate.

Similar to ABA, a SWPBIS framework bases decisions from reinforcers on choosing technologies of functional assessment on valid and reliable data (Dunlap et al., 2008). A SWPBIS framework is a multi-tiered model of prevention, requires rigorous universal screening, and encompasses the integration of behavioral and education practices (Farmer et al., 2014)

developed from the principles of ABA (Baer et al., 1968). The data collected is continuously analyzed and decisions are made based on evidence to meet the specific needs of the school. When problematic student behavior is not changed by universal strategies, a more specific plan can be formulated to meet the individual student's needs. The findings from the data analysis influence the types of reinforcers utilized and environmental circumstances are manipulated. The educated decisions that are made will change behaviors and influence the perceptions of teachers and administrators toward the school climate.

Related Literature

Issues of School Discipline

During the last two decades there has been an increase in, and heightened awareness of, school violence across the United States (Dupper, 2010; Lynass, Tsai, Richman, & Cheney, 2012; Skiba & Peterson, 2000). Even though behavioral issues are not a new problem, punitive disciplinary strategies have increased substantially as a result (Lassen et al., 2006; Sherrod, Getch, & Zlomek-Daigle, 2009) and schools across the country have adopted a zero-tolerance disciplinary philosophy (Nocera et al., 2014). In response to deadly school violence, Congress passed the Gun-Free Schools Act (GFSA) in 1994 which mandated that each state enact legislation that requires a one-year expulsion for any student who brings a firearm to school (Dupper, 2010). Within three years of the implementation of the GFSA, about 94% of U.S. public schools had a zero-tolerance policy for firearms (Dupper, 2010). Over time, zero-tolerance policies have expanded to include other infractions of school policies that had a wider impact on student achievement and school climate (Dupper, 2010; Sharkey & Fenning, 2012).

Several factors have contributed to the increase in school violence and discipline issues. Parents and communities fail to provide necessary prerequisite social skills and supports, therefore more students are entering school with antisocial behavior (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). These antisocial behaviors range from a lack of respect for authority, picking on other students, using profanity, noncompliance, and aggression (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). Students who do not demonstrate positive behavior and display antisocial behaviors adversely affect the school climate. There has been a transformation within many schools in that a disorderly, unsafe, and disruptive environment has replaced a predictable, consistent, and safe environment (Muscott et al., 2004). In response to the negative changes in behavior and increased efforts to foster a safe school climate, more schools have implemented a “get tough” or “zero-tolerance” disciplinary policy (Safran & Oswald, 2003).

A zero-tolerance policy is the most broadly implemented disciplinary policy in the USA (Sharkey & Fenning, 2012). Zero-tolerance policies were originally aimed at firearms and other weapons but the scope was later expanded to include drug possession, fighting, smoking, and drinking (Han & Akiba, 2011). A zero-tolerance policy assigns specific, predetermined, and punitive discipline strategies in response to violations of school rules, regardless of individual circumstances (Sharkey & Fenning, 2012). To enforce a zero-tolerance disciplinary policy, many schools have hired security officers, installed metal detectors, and placed at-risk students in alternative educational facilities (Lassen et al., 2006). A zero-tolerance policy is intended to “send a message” that certain behaviors will not be tolerated (Skiba & Peterson, 2000).

Zero-tolerance disciplinary policies are well intended in their efforts to keep students and teachers safe and to provide a healthy school climate. Unfortunately, research has proven that not only are zero-tolerance policies not working but that they actually lead to an increase in negative

and antisocial behavior (Dupper, 2010; Lewis & Sugai, 1999). Punishments from zero-tolerance disciplinary policies often result in suspensions, expulsions, corporal punishment, and other negative consequences that remove students from the school environment (Dupper, 2010; Skiba & Peterson, 2000). These policies lead to negative outcomes for the most at-risk students, such as dropping out of school or incarceration, and fail to provide proactive measures that teach positive behaviors (Sharkey & Fenning, 2012). Because of these zero-tolerance disciplinary policies, students do not have as many opportunities to positively interact with their school environment and learn how to make a positive contribution to their school climate (Muscott et al., 2004).

Negative consequences and harsh disciplinary policies have outpaced the use of positive reinforcers both in general and special education (Skiba & Peterson, 2000). Based on studies by Lewis and Sugai (1999), harsh disciplinary policies exacerbate and contribute to children and youths challenging behavior patterns. These types of disciplinary policies have not proven sufficient to foster a positive school climate and prevent the occurrence of school violence (Skiba & Peterson, 2000). Harsh disciplinary policies, such as corporal punishment, may teach students that violence is a legitimate way to solve problems (Farmer & Lambright, 2008), which leads to further perpetuating the prevalence of student aggression and behavior problems. Punitive approaches and harsh disciplinary policies only present a short-term fix to what is often a chronic and long-term problem (Osher et al., 2010). Evidence indicates that students with the most severe problem behaviors are the least likely to be responsive to severe consequences, and the intensity and frequency of their behavior is likely to become worse not better (Sugai & Horner, 2006).

In a zero-tolerance or harsh disciplinary policy, removal from the environment through suspensions or expulsions are the most common type of punishments. Removal from the school environment exacerbates a student's academic and behavior difficulties (Sharkey & Fenning, 2012). When students are removed from the classroom or school, they do not have an equitable opportunity to learn the content material or content skills needed to be successful. Therefore, the student's learning gap increases, causing frustration levels to rise that in turn causes an increase in negative behavior (Lewis & Sugai, 1999; Muscott et al., 2004). Another major problem is that suspensions and expulsions disproportionately affect students with emotional and behavioral disorders and students of color (Dupper, 2010; Osher et al., 2010; Skiba & Peterson, 2000; Suga & Horner, 2006). When students are suspended or expelled from school, they feel disconnected and are likely to engage with peers involved in delinquent behaviors, which leads to truancy, dropout, and entry into the juvenile justice system (Sharkey & Fenning, 2012).

In view of the evidence indicating that zero-tolerance disciplinary policies are detrimental to students and the school environment, there has been an increase in alternative disciplinary policies. ABA supports the notion that punishment alone cannot teach new behavior (Skiba & Peterson, 2000) and, across the USA, there has been a call for a more balanced discipline approach. Recent mandates such as Safe Schools, No Child Left Behind, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act have increased expectations that schools will provide for the educational needs of all students to create safer learning environments (Fitzgerald et al., 2014; Sugai & Horner, 2006). In 2011, the federal government launched the Supportive School Discipline Initiative to ensure discipline strategies are administered fairly, support all students, encourage school engagement, and improve the overall learning climate (Sharkey & Fenning, 2012). Mandates for balanced disciplinary policies have opened the doors for thousands of

schools to implement SWPBIS (Horner et al., 2014; Marchant, Heath, & Miramontes, 2012; Safran & Oswald, 2003).

Historical Development of PBIS

The concerns that arose out of zero-tolerance and harsh disciplinary policies caused a rise in interest about implementing a more productive and supportive method of handling discipline. The aversive consequences of zero-tolerance and harsh disciplinary policies were compounding the problem and hurting the school climate (Sharkey & Fenning, 2012; Sugai & Horner, 2006). The term “positive behavior support” emerged in the mid-1980s as a response to these disciplinary policies and evolved into a broader, more systematic framework to help students with behavioral needs (Dunlap et al., 2014). Initially designed to meet the needs of special needs students, positive behavior support over time has extended to all students across the entire educational setting (Fitzgerald et al., 2014; Muscott et al., 2004; Sugai & Horner, 2006)

The demographics of the United States continue to change, thus affecting the racial, social, and economic structure of schools. Public schools are becoming increasingly culturally, racially, and linguistically diverse. By the year 2050, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates that individuals who have historically been considered the “minority” will compose greater than 50% of the population (Sugai et al., 2012). Owing to the rapidly diversifying enrollment in public schools, a behavioral framework that allows all students to experience equitable outcomes is warranted (Vincent, Randall, Cartledge, Tobin, & Swain-Bradway, 2011). Therefore, when implementing an evidence-based practice, such as a SWPBIS framework, the changing culture must be carefully considered (Sugai et al., 2012).

In addition, to ensure their students are mastering specific skills and succeeding in standardized tests, educators must deal with nonacademic factors that influence the instructions they provide (Lassen et al., 2006). With the evolution of inclusive, educational services, an increasing number of students who have developmental disabilities and disruptive behavior disorders are now able to attend the nation's schools (Luiselli et al., 2001). Antisocial behavior can cause students to have difficulty achieving success unless schools, families, and communities organize proactive behavioral structures and supports (Lewis & Sugai, 1999).

In the 1990s, researchers questioned the lack of attention to academic instruction and behavioral support towards students with emotional and behavioral problems (Lane et al., 2011). Research over the previous thirty years had demonstrated that the education of children with disabilities, especially emotional and behavioral disabilities, can be made more effective by providing incentives for whole school approaches (Dunlap et al., 2014; Fitzgerald et al., 2014; Sugai & Horner, 2006). Another important factor in the development of SWPBIS is the realization that many children and youth with emotional and behavioral disabilities are unidentified and unserved (Lane et al., 2011). If behavioral disabilities and disorders continue without support and interventions, those students may not be successful academically or socially and the probability of them dropping out of school and being incarcerated increases.

Educators and researchers have found alternatives to zero-tolerance and harsh disciplinary policies to reverse the negative trend in behavior management policies. The application of behavior practices for all students, in all school settings, and involving all staff became known as "school-wide PBIS" (Sugai, 2007). In contrast to traditional punitive and reactionary methods commonly associated with controlling students' behavioral challenges, SWPBIS offers constructive ways to address preemptively the function of behavior in both

environmental and individual contexts (Marchant et al., 2012). A SWPBIS approach to preventing undesirable problem behaviors and promoting positive behaviors has emerged as an alternative to more exclusionary and punitive forms of school-wide discipline (Solomon et al., 2012).

The SWPBIS framework began to take shape and key features were articulated as research and educational practices explored alternative methods of discipline. The critical components of SWPBIS include preventing the occurrence of problem behavior, teaching and encouraging clearly defined behavior expectation in natural contexts, school-wide data-based decision making, and function-based interventions and systems of support for students whose behaviors are not responsive to general school-wide efforts (Sugai, 2007). SWPBIS is not a generic behavioral management plan or curriculum, but a framework for establishing district and school capacity for adopting a set of organizational systems and specific practices based on specific needs of a district or school (Horner et al., 2014).

Over the past 30 years, the federal government has passed legislation in its efforts to encourage research and implementation of preemptive and positive behavioral policies. In the 1990s, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, and Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports used a three-tiered prevention logic to establish a continuum of positive behavioral and instruction supports (Sugai, 2007). The reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities' Education Act (IDEA) of 1997 furthered the development of SWPBIS by allocating funding to provide training and technical assistance to states that were implementing practices of SWPBIS (Dunlap et al., 2014). IDEA (1997) also expanded the role of SWPBIS to include greater numbers of students in the general education environment (Safran & Oswald, 2003). In 2004, the federal government again extended SWPBIS with the

reauthorization of IDEA, which emphasized early intervention services to meet the behavioral needs of students at risk for emotional and behavioral disorders in an effort to improve school engagement and reduce dropout rates (Lynass et al., 2012). The application of legislation has enabled general education and special education to become increasingly aligned to improve the quality of life for students and foster a positive school climate (Richter, Lewis, & Hagar, 2012).

The alignment of general education and special education is enhanced by a systematic organization of school environments that enable educators to increase the capacity to adopt, use, and sustain effective behavioral practices and processes for all students (Muscott et al., 2004). Since the early 1990s, greater attention has been directed toward approaches that increase the availability, adoption, and sustained use of validated practices and applying the science of human behavior to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of school-wide systems (Sugai & Horner, 2006). The framework or “blueprint” for implementing SWPBIS was developed in the early 1990s and, since then, several states such as Kansas, Florida, and New Hampshire have embraced SWPBIS (Sugai & Horner, 2006; Sugai & Simonsen, 2012). Since 2000, over 20,000 schools in every state have implemented a SWPBIS framework (Aydin, Kozleski, Schrader, Rodrigues, & Pelton, 2014). The trend data reveals that the need and effectiveness of SWPBIS has encouraged additional schools to implement the framework to meet their specific needs.

SWPBIS involves teaching and reinforcing of appropriate behaviors while redirecting and replacing negative behaviors (Sharkey & Fenning, 2012). Schools implementing SWPBIS will see an increase in behavior, prosocial, and eventually academic achievement after one to two years of implementation (Muscott et al., 2004). Within a SWPBIS framework, schools adopt three to five broad social expectations and behavioral indicators that contain a mixture of empirically substantiated and contextual features (Lynass et al., 2012). However, for a SWPBIS

framework to be successful, school practitioners must resist traditionally held beliefs and practices when faced with behavioral challenges (Bambara, Goh, Kern, & Caskie, 2012). A SWPBIS framework is an attractive alternative to traditional disciplinary policies because it fosters an optimal learning environment for all students (Bradshaw et al., 2010) by teaching students appropriate and positive ways to interact with their environment.

SWPBIS Implementation

A SWPBIS framework is not a standard curriculum “one size fits all” package but is instead based around meeting each school’s unique needs (Molloy, Moore, Trail, Epps, & Hopfer, 2013). SWPBIS implementation will vary based on each school but there are core components, models, and best practices that are essential for a successful and sustained implementation (Horner et al., 2014). By implementing SWPBIS, schools will restructure their discipline policies to provide universal, targeted, and intensive supports to encourage positive social, emotional, and behavioral growth in all students (Feuerborn & Chinn, 2012). The support of a school’s staff, strategic implementation plans, and quality professional development must be included to transform a school’s traditional model of discipline to a proactive, positive discipline model.

A SWPBIS framework is implemented throughout the entire school environment. This includes structured locations such as classrooms, but also unstructured settings including hallways, restrooms, cafeteria, and buses. A SWPBIS framework expands the scope of the entire school, classrooms, and individual students (Sherrod et al., 2009) to promote positive behavior and to improve school climate. Schools represent a complex organization of people,

environments, and policies that must function as a coordinated task, which makes implementation a challenging process (Sprague et al., 2001).

In a SWPBIS framework, essential components have been established to guide the implementation process and create sustainability. A leadership team is first created to implement SWPBIS with high fidelity, ensure sustainability, and build a strong social culture in the school (Horner et al., 2014). The next core elements the leadership team focuses on are training, coaching, evaluation, and behavioral expertise (Horner et al., 2014). After these elements are established, the local school/district begins installation and implementation of SWPBIS (Horner et al., 2014).

The SWPBIS Implementation Blueprint identifies seven evidence-based practices, or essential components, that should occur during implementation. These evidence-based practices include:

1. Formation of leadership teams, 2. Behavior purpose statement, 3. Positive expectations and behaviors, 4. Procedures for teaching school-wide expected behaviors, 5. Continuum of procedures for encouraging expected behaviors, 6. Continuum of procedures for discouraging rule violations, and 7. Procedures for on-going databased monitoring and evaluation (Utley & Obiakor, 2012, pp. 48–49).

These evidence-based practices must be effectively investigated, carefully crafted, and clearly articulated. The SWPBIS model follows the three-tiered prevention framework, where a universal system of support is integrated with selective and preventive interventions for students displaying a higher level of need (Pas & Bradshaw, 2012). The intervention methodologies used to implement a SWPBIS framework should be culture free or culturally neutral (Bal, Kozleski,

Schrader, Rodriguez, & Pelton, 2014) to provide an equitable school environment and to guard against disproportionate office referrals of special education students and minority groups.

Studies by Bal et al. (2014) have shown that SWPBIS takes into account the whole school context and strives to create a cohesive, supportive, and positive social climate for all children by unifying general education and special education resources and providing early identification and intervention. By identifying students early and providing interventions, SWPBIS can prevent minor issues from becoming major issues. A major component of PBIS is to provide positive reinforcement to students for appropriate behavior to decrease problem behaviors (Brandt, Chitiyo, & May, 2014), with these positive reinforcements accepted and applied throughout the majority of the school to result in meaningful change.

In 2008, the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) contacted the PBIS National Technical Assistance Center (TA Center) to establish a SWPBIS network throughout the state (GaDOE, 2014). The TA Center assisted the GaDOE in forming a state leadership team to develop a state action plan (GaDOE, 2014). Since 2008, over 400 school teams from 36 local education agencies in Georgia have been trained to implement SWPBIS (GaDOE, 2014). Georgia has incorporated a 4-tier model of SWPBIS that increases support and interventions as students ascend the tiers. Tier 1 is designed to meet the needs of 80–90% of all students by combined preventative and proactive measures that focus on support for all students before behavioral errors develop (Hanson et al., 2014; Horner et al., 2014). Tier 1 provides the foundation for SWPBIS that teaches contextually relevant social skills, providing frequent positive reinforcement for expected behavior, and arranging teaching and learning environments that discourage inappropriate behavior (Sugai & Horner, 2006). In Tier 2, students are identified as needing additional support and individualized interventions are utilized to reduce challenging

behavioral problems (Hanson et al., 2014). If students are not making adequate progress then they will move to Tier 3. Tier 3 involves an in-depth analysis to develop individualized plans for supporting desired behavioral outcomes (Hanson et al., 2014). Students not responding adequately to Tier 3 support will be moved to Tier 4, where students may be placed in specialized programs outside the regular classroom environment (GaDOE, 2014).

Since 2009, Griffin-Spalding County and Lee County School districts in the state of Georgia have piloted SWPBIS and reported significant decreases in office discipline referrals. In Griffin-Spalding County, the number of days students spend out of school decreased by 30% and the number of bus referrals decreased by 53% (GaDOE, 2014). Lee County has experienced a 58% reduction in office referrals and a 24% reduction in out-of-school suspension days (GaDOE, 2014).

A critical component of SWPBIS implementation is securing school-wide agreements and supports from faculty and administration (Muscott et al., 2004). The perception of stakeholders, such as teachers and administrators, is a fundamental part of the implementation process (Marchant et al., 2012) and is essential to SWPBIS sustainability (Matthews, 2014). Without administrative and faculty “buy-in”, system change efforts are likely to occur slowly and, at worst, are destined to fail (Muscott et al., 2004). Therefore, it is imperative that stakeholders understand the rationale and justification for a school-wide change. The rationale for change should be simple, clear, and easily understood by school personnel (George et al., 2007) so they will have a positive perception of the SWPBIS framework.

The quality of implementation is important for a SWPBIS to achieve its goals and provide sustained school change that improves school climate. Implementation quality is the

degree to which program delivery adheres to the original program model (Molloy et al., 2013). The SWPBIS model is research based and grounded in operant conditioning and applied behavioral science. However, because of various factors, original program models are not always followed precisely in a real world setting. Barriers to implementation quality such as insufficient facilitator training, lack of administrative support, and negative staff perceptions have been found to reduce program effect sizes to half or a third of what they would otherwise be (Molloy et al., 2013). The decrease in program effect has caused increasing interest among federal agencies, researchers, and policy makers in the processes whereby prevention programs, such as SWPBIS, are moved into real world settings (Pas & Bradshaw, 2012).

To fully implement and sustain the program, staff and administration must be committed to SWPBIS; school personnel need to be provided with ongoing resources and training, and implementers' knowledge and skills must be advanced (McIntosh et al., 2013). The key factors for sustaining implementation of SWPBIS are school priority, routine data analysis by the SWPBIS team, district priority, and capacity building (McIntosh et al., 2013). Other factors that contribute to sustainability include leadership, funding, time to meet regularly, and decision making procedures (Coffey & Horner, 2012). All of these factors work together towards the implementation quality and sustainability to transform the promise of a SWPBIS into a reality of improved student achievement (Coffey & Horner, 2012).

Administrators contribute to the implementation process and sustainability of SWPBIS by providing the staff with quality professional development and time to prepare and practice. By orienting staff to new ways of responding to behavior, they increase the likelihood of sustainability of the SWPBIS framework (Coffey & Horner, 2012). An administrator's support of SWPBIS affects how the staff perceives the framework and affects sustainability (Debnam,

Pas, & Bradshaw, 2011; George et al., 2007; Horner et al., 2014; Pinkelman et al., 2015). A study by Debnam et al. (2011) discovered that in schools where there was low perceived administrator support for SWPBIS, the staff was less motivated to engage in activities or make the extra effort and time required to implement the interventions. To assist schools in implementing a SWPBIS, the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Positive Behavior Support designed a national in-service training model. The training model serves as an exemplar with the goal of optimizing the probability that SWPBIS training will build an enduring capacity to provide ongoing and effective support (Dunlap et al., 2000). Administrators should utilize evidence based, proven implementation models to achieve high implementation quality and sustainability that will positively influence the behavior of students.

Effectiveness of SWPBIS

The implementation of a high quality SWPBIS framework has been proven through numerous studies to influence positively school climate through the increase of desired behaviors and the rise of academic achievement. Coffey and Horner (2012) found that students attending a SWPBIS school clearly understood the expected behaviors and rewards, both social and tangible, which increased the use of those expected behaviors resulting in a positive school climate. A SWPBIS framework clearly establishes expected behaviors and focuses on student support to ensure a safe and respectable school climate (Betts et al., 2014). As these expectations and behaviors are reinforced and learned, the transformation of student behavior will positively influence school discipline, academic growth, and ultimately school climate.

Implementing SWPBIS with fidelity is an important factor in determining the overall effectiveness of the behavior program. Flannery et al. (2014) examined the quality of SWPBIS

implementation and found that schools with higher scores on the School-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET) experienced greater reductions in office discipline referrals. The SET is utilized to evaluate critical components of a SWPBIS framework during the school year (Flannery et al., 2014). Therefore, it is important for school personnel to ensure proper adherence to the core elements of SWPBIS implementation to achieve maximize effectiveness.

SWPBIS can be especially beneficial to at-risk students. Bradshaw, Waasdorp, and Leaf (2014) found that students attending SWPBIS schools who were at-risk and high-risk demonstrated the greatest academic and behavioral gains and had the largest decrease in the likelihood of receiving an office discipline referral. It is important to identify problem behaviors and at-risk students early and begin interventions that will help them adapt to social and academic settings. Students exhibiting problem behavior in elementary school is one of the leading indicators in the identification of students at risk of dropping out of school in the future (Curtis, Van Horne, Robertson, & Karvonen, 2010). Antisocial behavior in elementary school can lead to social awkwardness, academic frustration, and issues with authority, which negatively influences a student's quality of life.

A behavioral curriculum and reward system will enhance students' social skills and will allow them to build healthier relationships, which will improve overall school discipline. Bradshaw et al. (2012) found that SWPBIS has a proximal effect on a range of behavioral problems such as office disciplinary referrals, concentration difficulties, aggressive behavior, as well as improvements in prosocial behaviors. Feuerborn and Tyre (2012) discovered that in the first year of implementing a SWPBIS framework, schools experienced a 20% reduction in the number of unacceptable behavior slips (UBS) and a 38% decrease in UBS for safety violations. The study also revealed that there was a 31% decrease in UBS issued for student aggression and

fighting. A reduction in problem behaviors will decrease the referrals to the office, thereby decreasing suspension rates and allowing students to have more time in the education environment.

In a case study performed by Fitzgerald et al. (2014), researchers examined the impact of a SWPBIS framework at a high school and a middle school. After one year of implementation, both schools significantly decreased their number of office discipline referrals. The case study revealed a 73% decrease in detentions, a 50% decrease in out-of-school suspensions, and a 36% decrease in in-school suspensions (Fitzgerald et al., 2014). Solomon et al. (2012) conducted a meta-analysis to investigate how SWPBIS affects student behavior at both the middle and elementary school levels. The study revealed that SWPBIS at the middle school level had a greater effect on reducing negative student behavior than in the elementary school, however, both showed significant improvements (Solomon et al., 2012). The findings from this meta-analysis study illustrate the effectiveness of SWPBIS and provide more rationale for schools to investigate and implement a behavioral program.

The research by Bradshaw et al. (2010) supports the findings of Fitzgerald et al. (2014) and Solomon et al. (2012) where schools implementing SWPBIS report significant decreases in suspension rates. A critical area where the findings from the different studies were similar to each other is the impact of SWPBIS on suspension rates. Decreases in suspensions are a particularly notable effect of SWPBIS as declining suspensions are associated with increased instructional time in the classroom (Feuerborn & Tyre, 2012). The improved school discipline achieved by SWPBIS reduces the amount of disruptions and office referrals, thereby decreasing both in-school and out-of school suspensions. The more time students spend in the classroom

and are provided access to a healthy learning environment, the more opportunities they have to learn and achieve academic success.

SWPBIS improves behavior skills followed by an increase in academic achievement and enhanced overall school climate. Student behavior is relevant because it affects the amount of instruction time, quality of education, and influences the perceptions of teachers and administrators. Nocera et al. (2014) found that a SWPBIS framework improves the students' sense of school safety and increases academic success, such as the number of students meeting or exceeding state academic standards. Gage et al. (2015) have shown that the underlying assumption is that by improving social behavior, schools have more time and ability to deliver effective curriculum and instruction.

A SWPBIS framework creates opportunities for learning by improving the classroom ecology, which in turn engages students and reduces class disruptions (McIntosh, Ty, & Miller, 2014). Students who are active participants in their learning are more focused on their academic journey and completing the task, therefore, they are not as motivated to disrupt the learning environment. Another important feature of SWPBIS is that students can learn self-control and how to use replacement behaviors for ineffective coping strategies (McIntosh, Ty et al., 2014). The improved behavior of a challenging student will not only increase their opportunity to learn, but will also improve the classroom environment, thus allowing other students the possibility for greater academic growth.

A SWPBIS framework provides behavioral, social, and academic effects that are closely connected and work together to improve school climate. The emphasis on classroom and school behaviors is associated with the reduction of behavioral problems, improved teacher efficacy,

and the improvement of school climate (Gage et al., 2015). Two randomized controlled trials studying SWPBIS in elementary schools indicated significant improvements in school climate and achievement (Bradshaw et al., 2012). Student behaviors can influence the perceptions of teachers and how they feel about their ability and effectiveness to control their class and educate their students. Teachers and students will build constructive relationships and experience academic growth, which ultimately leads to a strong school climate (Osman, 2012).

School Climate

One major goal of a SWPBIS framework is to establish a positive school and classroom environment that fosters social and academic growth (Caldarella et al., 2011; Osman, 2012). In a SWPBIS framework, student expectations are predictable, directly taught, consistently acknowledged, and actively monitored, which directly influences school climate (Osman, 2012). Establishing a healthy school climate is important because the classroom and school environment has become a central consideration to academic and social behavior success (Fallon et al., 2012). In a nationally representative study of the direct effects of perception on climate, Urick and Bowers (2011) revealed that an unsafe environment with discipline problems does not allow for students, teachers, and principals to focus on learning and creates negative perceptions of students. Therefore, there is a growing interest in school climate reform and school improvement strategies across the nation (Thapa et al., 2013). Caldarella et al. (2011) conducted a longitudinal experimental design study over a four-year period that analyzed the responses from the PBS supplemental Questionnaire and the Indicators of School Quality and discovered schools that had implemented SWPBIS achieved a healthier climate. The positive influence of a SWPBIS framework on school climate has increased the number of schools implementing SWPBIS frameworks (Caldarella et al., 2011).

According to the National School Climate Council (2015), a sustained school climate is defined in the following way:

A sustainable, positive school climate fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributive, and satisfying life in a democratic society. This climate includes norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, and physically safe. People are engaged and respected. Students, families, and educators work together to develop, live, and contribute to a shared school vision. Educators model and nurture an attitude that emphasizes the benefits of, and satisfaction from, learning. Each person contributes to the operations of the school as well as the care of the physical environment.

Wang, Berry, and Swearer (2013) further narrowed the definition of school climate as the milieu created by interactions among and between adults and students and individual beliefs and attitudes. A positive school climate promotes and breeds a successful outlook atmosphere that improves the quality of social interactions and academic experiences (Osman, 2012).

In their study, Wang et al. (2013) argued that providing students with a social, emotional, ethical, and academic education, and a safe, caring school environment helps build a positive school climate. In a review of school climate research, Thapa et al. (2013) identified five dimensions of school climate:

- a) Safety (e.g., rules and norms, physical safety, and social-emotional safety), (b)
- Relationships (e.g., respect for diversity, school connectedness/engagement, social support, leadership, and students' race/ethnicity and their perceptions of school climate),
- (c) Teaching and Learning (e.g., social, emotional, ethical, and civic learning; service

learning; support for academic learning; support for professional relationships; teachers' and students' perceptions of school climate), (d) Institutional Environment (e.g., physical surroundings, resources, and supplies), and (e) the School Improvement Process.

A SWPBIS framework addresses each of these five dimensions of school climate in its goal to improve the quality of life for all students across all educational settings (Thapa et al., 2013).

The dimensions of school climate support each other and are intertwined to create a safe, healthy, and warm learning environment. However, it is a collaborative effort between administrators, teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholders to ensure each dimension is adequately applied.

Teachers' Perceptions

The perception of teachers is vital in understanding the impact of implementing a SWPBIS framework and crucial in determining its sustainability. Teachers within the same school have different experiences, perspectives, and roles; therefore, their perceptions of school climate and the effectiveness of SWPBIS may be different (Booren et al., 2011). An in-depth understanding of teachers' perceptions of behavior is essential to meet the challenges of being proactive, identifying problem behaviors, and providing early intervention (Tillery, Varjas, Meyers, & Collins, 2010). Administrators should understand the key factors that influence teachers' perceptions and strategies on how to improve them before implementing a school-wide framework. The perception of teachers not only influences SWPBIS, but also affects students, administrators, and other stakeholders.

In a study investigating the importance of school climate, Osman (2012) described school climate as the teachers' perceptions of their work environment that is influenced by formal and informal relationships, personalities of participants, and leadership in the organization. Thapa et

al. (2013) extended this description of school climate by discussing the important aspects of positive school climate. Their review of school climate research revealed that teachers' work environment, peer relationships, and feelings of inclusion and respect are important aspects of positive school climate. In addition, classroom level factors, such as the proportion of students with disruptive behaviors, have the greatest influence on teachers' perceptions of school climate (Thapa et al., 2013).

Teacher self-efficacy is a determining factor in how teachers rate their school climate and influences their interactions with students, parents, and administrators. In a study regarding the relationships between implementation of SWPBIS and teacher self-efficacy, Kelm and McIntosh (2012) defined teacher self-efficacy as, "teachers' perceptions of their ability to affect student outcomes" (p. 137). They found that teacher self-efficacy is an important factor that is related to many positive variables, such as academic achievement, motivation, and on-task behavior in students (Kelm & McIntosh, 2012). If teachers' self-efficacy improves, then they are more likely to build positive relationships with students and work harder. If teachers believe that they can positively affect student learning then self-efficacy improves, which in turn enhances school climate (Thapa et al., 2013).

Teachers are faced with a magnitude of challenges and responsibilities that influence their relationships and perceptions of school climate. Student discipline, poor working conditions, and a lack of emotional support are stressors that teachers experience and that have been linked to teacher burnout (Ross et al., 2012; Stauffer & Mason, 2013). Stressors do not have to be major incidents to influence teacher perceptions in a negative way. Even minor incidents of disruptive behavior have been shown to deplete teachers' energy, cause teacher stress, and increase the likelihood of burnout (Thompson & Webber, 2010). A recent study by Stauffer and

Mason (2013) reported that student achievement and students' attitudes were also stressors. Understanding the stressors that are associated with teaching and understanding how to improve teacher perception of school climate will enhance the working environment and decrease teacher burnout. A SWPBIS has been proven to improve student behavior and has been recommended as an effective means for supporting teachers (Ross et al., 2012).

Ross et al. (2012) used a multilevel regression approach and analyzed data from 40 elementary schools and found that schools implementing SWPBIS had lower levels of teacher burnout and significantly higher levels of efficacy. Interestingly, the study found that when teachers' efforts are reinforced through improved academic and behavioral outcomes, their confidence, and the likelihood that they will exert that same effort in the future increases. This finding helps illustrate how operant behavior and ABA can explain not only students' actions but the actions of teachers as well. A study by Miramontes, Marchant, Heath, and Fischer (2011) found that reducing the amount of time required to implement interventions and rewarding teachers for their tireless commitment are effective ways to lessen the teachers' burden of implementing a SWPBIS.

For schools to implement a SWPBIS framework successfully, they need to identify barriers to implementation and strive to overcome these challenges. When implementing behavioral programs, teachers' perceptions, buy-in, and their ability to carry out interventions should be fully considered (Miramontes et al., 2011). The importance of staff perceptions to the successful implementation of SWPBIS is increasingly evident in research conducted over the last decade (Feuerborn, Tyre, & King, 2015). In a recent study regarding staff perceptions of behavior, Feuerborn et al. (2015) discovered that teacher perceptions were the most pervasive barriers to implementation of a SWPBIS. Teacher perceptions included philosophical beliefs

inconsistent with SWPBIS, limited knowledge of SWPBIS principles, and difficulties in collaborative problem solving with other staff and families (Feuerborn et al., 2015). The results from the Feuerborn et al. (2015) study are consistent and expand on a similar study by Hansen et al. (2014) that showed a positive and significant relationship between teachers' perception of SWPBIS and the success of the implementation process.

A study conducted by Collier and Henriksen (2012) investigated teachers' perceptions of a multiple high-risk behavior prevention program and found that teacher motivation, comfort level, and positive perception regarding the approach of the program were critical toward successful implementation. In addition, results indicated that targeting and enhancing teachers' perceptions in five areas would increase the effectiveness of the implementation process.

The five areas are (a) the public's perception of the school, (b) the school's positive changes to address high-risk behavior in the students, (c) the school's positive changes to address preventing practices that may increase high-risk behavior in students, (d) the effectiveness and consistency of the current program, and (e) the effectiveness of the program's mental health professional (Collier & Henriksen, 2012).

The manner in which teachers view student behaviors will influence the SWPBIS implementation process and their choice of behavior management strategies (Tillery et al., 2010). Understanding the student behaviors that teachers consider the most challenging and problematic will help schools determine specific interventions that will meet their needs (Alter, Walker, & Landers, 2013). The power of teacher buy-in increases the likelihood of successful implementation of interventions (Marchant et al., 2012), which improves the fidelity and sustainability of a SWPBIS.

Teachers' perceptions impact implementation of a SWPBIS and, in return, SWPBIS will have a positive influence on the perceptions of teachers. The SWPBIS framework is designed to unify all school staff, parents, students, and community members (Lane-Garon, Yergat, & Kralowec, 2012). An improved sense of community, belonging, and support by teachers enhances their perception of school climate (Hill & Flores, 2014; Thapa et al., 2013). Teachers with a more positive perception of their school regard their students' behaviors more favorably (Pas & Bradshaw, 2014) and the more positive interactions teachers have with students the more committed they are to student success (Kelm & McIntosh, 2012). A SWPBIS framework helps to supply a healthy learning environment and provides teachers with the support necessary to help students learn positive behaviors to replace negative behaviors. As a result, teachers' stressors will decrease, student engagement will increase, and relationships will improve (Caldarella et al., 2011; Curtis et al., 2010; Gage et al., 2015)

A teacher's training and experiences will influence their perceptions and their interactions with their environment (Booren et al., 2011; Kelm & McIntosh, 2012). Quality training and learning specific strategies to reinforce appropriate behavior, monitor students, and use data in the decision making process will improve how teachers perceive the school setting (Ross et al., 2012). Teachers with a higher positive perception about their own capacity to affect student outcomes and manage student behavior may implement SWPBIS with greater fidelity, thereby changing the learning environment of their students. Pas and Bradshaw (2014) observed that teachers with more favorable perceptions of the environment rated their students lower in having concentration problems, disruptive behaviors, and internalizing symptoms. The teachers' perceptions of school climate and student engagement contribute to real differences in school successes and failures for students (Price, 2015).

Administrators' Perceptions

In today's educational system, public school administrators are ultimately held responsible for the educational progress of all students within their school and for maintaining safe school environments (Richter et al., 2012). School staff must rely on each other and operate together within the bounds of the school's policies and regulations set forth by local, state, and federal agencies. This interdependence calls for a trust among individuals and groups within a school (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2014) to ensure the goals of the school are achieved. Clear expectations, support, and positive interactions by the administrator strongly influence teacher perceptions, student achievement, and school climate (Price, 2012). A SWPBIS is a promising approach to help administrators collaborate with staff members and effectively implement a proactive behavior management and discipline plan (Richter et al., 2012).

Administrators are responsible for fostering a compelling vision for the school, modeling desired behaviors of professional educators, and managing organizational resources effectively (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2014). An administrator is also responsible for implementing a universal behavior program that encourages appropriate social behavior, fosters rigorous academic experiences, and promotes a positive school climate. Effective administrators proactively address barriers to developing and maintaining an orderly school climate and model the behaviors they expect of students and staff (Protheroe, 2011). While implementing SWPBIS, school personnel perceive the role of the building administrator and administrative support as key factors that determine success and sustainability (Richter et al., 2012; Strickland-Cohen, McIntosh, & Horner, 2014). Hanson et al. (2014) have shown that school administrators are critical members in the implementation of SWPBIS and in developing the social climate of positive interaction between students and teachers.

McIntosh, Predy et al. (2014) investigated the perceived importance of specific contextual variables for initial implementation and sustainability of SWPBIS and identified key factors and barriers that influenced SWPBIS. Administrators who actively supported SWPBIS by making time for and regularly attending SWPBIS team meetings, as well as ensuring SWPBIS was a top priority had the strongest impact on implementation and sustainability (Matthews et al., 2014; McIntosh, Predy et al., 2014). The most significant barriers to SWPBIS implementation included staff buy-in, use of data, and misconceptions about SWPBIS (McIntosh, Predy et al., 2014). An administrator has the opportunity and authority to overcome these barriers and ensure that the implementation process is easier and less burdensome.

Administrators have the capacity to provide motivation, direction, and organization to support high-quality implementation of a school-wide program or initiative (Debnam et al., 2011). The perceptions of administrators influence their motivation, commitment, and priorities that directly influence the implementation of a SWPBIS. Printy and Williams (2015) examined the policy ecology that influences principals' views of response to intervention in determining the school plan for implementation and found that strong leadership at the site level and involvement of teachers makes a difference in how reform is implemented. Administrators are often perceived as a source of local power because of how they can affect working conditions and influence teachers (Hauserman, Ivankova, & Stick, 2013). An administrator's perception is important and has a significant impact on SWPBIS implementation and school climate.

Administrators can create trusting school spaces and supportive school context that fosters positive school improvement outcomes and promotes success (Price, 2012). An administrator's perceptions and actions affect student achievement, even if they do not directly instruct students on a daily basis (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2014; Urick & Bowers, 2011).

The administrator's leadership and perceived ability to lead the school is associated with the establishment of teachers' expectations and goals for students within the classroom, thereby having a direct relationship to student achievement (Urlick & Bowers, 2011). In the course of their leadership, administrators can influence the behavioral, social, and academic achievement of all students within their schools.

Summary

The rise and awareness of school violence in the 1990s led schools across the USA to design and enforce a zero-tolerance disciplinary policy. Research has proven that zero-tolerance and harsh disciplinary policies are ineffective and actually increase the behaviors they intended to decrease. As a result, schools have started implementing proactive and positive universal behavior frameworks as an alternative to reactive zero-tolerance procedures. Researchers have investigated SWPBIS, clearly articulated its rationale, and designed an implementation blueprint to help schools adopt the framework successfully (Cavanaugh & Swan, 2015; Matthews et al., 2014; Turnbull et al., 2002).

A review of the literature illustrated a wide scope of research on the design, implementation, and effects of SWPBIS. The majority of the research and evidence concerning SWPBIS is quantitative by nature, and is focused on implementation and student outcomes. The collection of quantitative data and findings from previous research studies are important in the decision making process to determine whether to implement SWPBIS within a school district. The quantitative data and findings also contribute to successfully implementing and sustaining SWPBIS, but it does not provide an exhaustive and comprehensive body of research.

The research is lacking in regards to administrators' and teachers' perceptions concerning SWPBIS and its influence on school climate (Booren et al., 2011; McIntosh, Kim et al., 2014).

Administrators' and teachers' perceptions are important in understanding what crucial stakeholders think about a SWPBIS and how it influences school climate. Research has emphasized the importance of administrators and teachers in the implementation process of school-wide initiatives, but more qualitative research needs to be conducted to examine various layers of perceptions that can benefit implementation and sustainability (McIntosh, Kim et al., 2014; Richter et al., 2012). The research lacks rich, detailed accounts of how administrators and teachers perceive the influence of a SWPBIS on the school climate in an elementary school setting. The present collective case study will fill this gap in the lack of qualitative data from administrators and teachers that addresses the influence of a SWPBIS framework on school climate.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

A collective case study was utilized to conduct and complete the research plan. The purpose of this collective case study is to explore and understand administrators' and teachers' perceptions on how a SWPBIS framework influences school climate at the elementary school level. Administrator and teacher perception was generally defined as their way of discerning, understanding, or interpreting a systematic approach designed to prevent negative behaviors detrimental to student success. This was achieved by establishing a positive school climate to promote better educational outcomes for all students, which may not be fully described through quantitative methods.

The beginning of this chapter discusses the design, setting, and participants of the collective case study. The chapter then proceeds with an examination of the procedures of the collective case study, the role of the researcher, data collection, and data analysis. Lastly, this chapter discusses the trustworthiness of the collective case study and ethical considerations are addressed. The purpose of Chapter Three is to present important information about the methodology of the research study and provide comprehensive details regarding the execution of the collective case study.

Design

The research study was qualitative in nature and utilized a collective case study methodology. A case study design allows study of the particularity and complexity of the cases to understand their activity within important circumstances (Stake, 1995) regarding a SWPBIS framework. The case study design is warranted because a contemporary phenomenon, such as a

SWPBIS framework, is to be investigated in-depth and within a real world context (Yin, 2014). The collective case study design was selected because the research study will explore a bounded system over time by collecting and analyzing in-depth data involving multiple sources. Another reason for choosing a collective case study design was that the researcher will study a single issue that has been implemented at three different sites. This design will provide different perspectives on the issue (Creswell, 2013), which will provide detailed information about the contemporary phenomenon.

Specifically, the collective case study design will be used to provide rich data on the perceptions of administrator and teacher perceptions of the influence SWPBIS has on school climate at the elementary school level. Three elementary schools within the same school district were selected because the district and each school have implemented a SWPBIS framework. Each elementary school is to be studied as an individual case, but the findings of the collective case study will ultimately be used to draw a single set of cross-case conclusions (Yin, 2014) concerning a SWPBIS framework implemented in the Mount Vernon School System (MVSS). The collective case research study will utilize triangulation for strengthening the trustworthiness of the research study by collecting and analyzing interview data, focus group data, and relevant documentation from three elementary schools in north Georgia.

The collective case study design is best suited to this research study to develop rich, in-depth descriptions and understandings of how administrators and teachers perceive the factors of a SWPBIS framework and its influence on school climate. Each case will illustrate positive and negative factors that shape relationships within the school environment. A case study design allows a researcher to present multiple perspectives and portray the different views (Stake, 1995) of an activity or program. Therefore, any differences in perceptions between administrators and

teachers will be revealed and portrayed to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the influence of a SWPBIS on school climate in a real world setting.

Research Questions

Central Question

How do administrators and teachers perceive the influence of SWPBIS on school climate at the elementary school level?

Subquestions

1. What features of SWPBIS are perceived as having a positive influence on school climate at the elementary school level?
2. What features of SWPBIS are perceived as having a negative influence on school climate at the elementary school level?
3. How has SWPBIS influenced relationships among students and adults in the elementary school?
4. What are the differences in perceptions between administrators and teachers of SWPBIS at the elementary school level?

Setting

The collective case study was conducted within the small rural MVSS in Westmoreland County, north Georgia. Pseudonyms were used for the county, school system, each elementary school, and all participants. The MVSS was chosen because the district and all schools within its jurisdiction have voluntarily implemented SWPBIS. Each of the three elementary schools selected for the research study provided opportunities to explore and understand administrators

and teachers perceptions on how SWPBIS influences school climate. Another factor for selecting the site was its general proximity to the researcher. The site was within a reasonable distance that allowed for easy access and time for conducting interviews and focus group sessions. Utilizing this public school system in north Georgia provided the setting for the research of three elementary schools including administrators and teachers who implemented and experienced SWPBIS.

The MVSS is a Southern Association of Colleges and Schools accredited public school district in north Georgia. The district consists of three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. The elementary schools in the district consist of either grade levels of Pre-K to fifth grade or kindergarten to fifth grade. The MVSS has a district Response to Intervention Coordinator that supervises and oversees the RTI program and SWPBIS for each school. At the building level, a support specialist leads the school personnel in the implementation and facilitation of SWPBIS. A SWPBIS team has been established at each school to help ensure the success of the SWPBIS framework and to make any necessary changes to meet the specific needs of the school.

The MVSS has a student population of just over 2,900 students with a demographic population of 0.04% African American, 0.06% Asian and Pacific Islander, 4% Hispanic, 2% multiracial, and 93% Caucasian. The MVSS student population is comprised of 48% females and 52% males. The MVSS has 60.92% of students who are economically disadvantaged and qualify to receive free or reduced price lunches (GaDOE, 2015). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2015), Westmoreland County has a total population of 23,753 and a median annual household income of US\$34,239. The county has a general population that is 0.08% African American, 0.05% Asian and Pacific Islander, 2% Hispanic, 1.3% multiracial, and 96.9% Caucasian (U.S.

Census Bureau, 2015). The demographic data for Westmoreland County reflects the demographic data of MVSS.

The three elementary schools that participated in the collective case study were Nelson Elementary, Potomac Elementary, and Washington Elementary. Each elementary school has a principal, assistant principal, and SWPBIS team that provides leadership and organizational structure to the school. All of the elementary schools within the MVSS were designated Title I schools. Title I, Part A is included in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and provided financial assistance to local educational agencies and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). To be considered a Title I school at least 40% of the students within the school must qualify to receive free or reduced price lunches (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

The first school, Nelson Elementary School (NES), had a student population that was comprised of 475 students with a demographic population of 0.05% African American, 0.02% Asian and Pacific Islander, 4% Hispanic, 1 % multiracial, and 94% Caucasian. The NES student population contained 46% females and 54% males. The second school, Potomac Elementary School (PES), had a student population that was comprised of 405 students with a demographic population of 0.00% African American, 0.02% Asian and Pacific Islander, 3% Hispanic, 1.7% multiracial, and 95% Caucasian. The PES student population contained 45% females and 55% males. The third school, Washington Elementary School (WES), had a student population that was comprised of 464 students with a demographic population of 0.02% African American, 0.04% Asian and Pacific Islander, 5% Hispanic, 0.9% multiracial, and 93% Caucasian. The WES

student population contained 48% females and 52% males. These three elementary schools represent the ethnic, racial, and economic status of the county in which MVSS serves.

Participants

This collective case study utilized purposeful sampling because the participants chosen were able to inform purposefully an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). The participants selected provided their own experiences based on their specific role within the organizational structure of the school. Criterion sampling procedures were used because all cases in the research study met predetermined criteria (Patton, 2002). Criterion sampling can add an important qualitative component to SWPBIS (Patton, 2002), which can be useful for quality assurance (Creswell, 2013).

The participants for the collective case study included one administrator, three teachers, and a focus group of six to nine staff members from each of the elementary schools selected in the MVSS. Each participant in the research study was currently working in an elementary school within the MVSS that has implemented SWPBIS. The participants selected were able to facilitate the expansion of information (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) necessary to answer the research questions of this collective case study. Each of the participants in the research study were given a pseudonym to protect the real participants identities and to ensure the final case report will not affect the subsequent actions of those that were studied (Yin, 2014) or their superiors.

The participants in the collective case study were selected owing to specific characteristics of their role and experiences within the school, and included administrators and teachers. The administrator who is primarily responsible for discipline and helps sustain the SWPBIS was interviewed at each school. Teachers from kindergarten, third grade, and fifth grade were also interviewed to provide a wider scope of experiences based on the developmental

age of their students. The teachers selected for the interview were not members of the school's SWPBIS team and were selected by the administrator of the particular school being studied. This purposeful sampling allowed for four interviews at each of the three elementary schools selected for the collective case study. Focus groups were also conducted to collect more data to provide a deeper understanding of teachers' perceptions of SWPBIS. The focus group sessions consisted of members of the SWPBIS team at each elementary school.

The sample size for the collective case study was 37 participants. This sample size allowed for multiple realities of the SWPBIS framework from varying roles within a school. The number of participants strengthens the credibility of the data collected and increases the trustworthiness of the study. The data collected on the participants in this collective case study included race, gender, position within school organization, years in the educational profession, and highest degree earned.

Procedures

The first step of the collective case study was to obtain the necessary approvals. The research study was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Liberty University for approval. After official IRB approval, a pilot study was conducted to help refine the data collection plans, interview questions, and data analysis procedures (Yin, 2014). After confirmation that the collective case study received IRB approval, the SWPBIS director of the MVSS was contacted to explain the research and obtain approval to conduct a collective case study of three elementary schools operating within their district.

Following approval by the MVSS, the researcher contacted the elementary school administrators to explain the research in detail so they would have full disclosure and knowledge of the procedures and rationale for the collective case study. Data collection began immediately

after the discussion with each school administrator. The majority of the documents were collected electronically, however some were hard copies. Interviews and focus groups were scheduled and conducted at each elementary school based on the availability of the participants. The interview and focus group questions originated from a selected list that was revised based on feedback from the pilot study. On the day of the interviews and focus group sessions the appropriate consent forms were distributed, signed, and collected. The interviews and focus group sessions were digitally recorded, and then transcribed verbatim. The data collected was analyzed based on the procedures established for each type of data.

The Researcher's Role

As the human instrument of the collective case study, it was important that I conducted myself with integrity, hone valuable research skills, and conduct the research study with fidelity. The credibility of qualitative methods hinges to a great extent on the skill, competence, and rigor of the research (Patton, 2002). To conduct a high quality case study, the researcher should be well trained because of the continuous interaction between the theoretical issues being studied and the data being collected (Yin, 2014).

As a former classroom teacher and an assistant principal at an elementary school, I have developed my own theories regarding discipline and utilize discipline strategies that I think are effective. I see the necessity to create a positive school climate and I think that behaviors that are more positive should be taught and reinforced at the elementary school level. Therefore, I brought some bias into the collective case study. However, I do not have experience with implementing or sustaining SWPBIS and have not concretely formulated an opinion on how it can influence school climate. In addition, I do not have any personal or professional relationships with any of the participants in the study or any of the elementary schools or the school system.

To minimize any biased procedures, I depended on current literature and case study protocols to guide the collective case study.

Data Collection

For the collective case study, data was collected from face-to-face interviews, focus group sessions, and documentation. By collecting different sources of evidence, the collective case study was strengthened and it improved the overall quality of the study (Yin, 2014). The research study used three different methods for collecting data to develop converging lines of inquiry (Yin, 2014). Pseudonyms were used for the county, school system, each elementary school, and participant in the collective case study. The data will be stored in a secure location, i.e., the researcher's locked filing cabinet and password-protected computer, for three years after the study is completed. After this three-year period, the documents will be deleted or shredded. Only the researcher, a scribe, and the researcher's dissertation committee will have access to the research data. All data and documents were organized, predominately in computer files, to make them readily retrievable for later inspection and analysis (Yin, 2014).

The data collection process followed an established order to ensure the collective case study provided rich details and pertinent information to explore administrators' and teachers' perceptions on how a SWPBIS framework influences school climate at the elementary school level. First, relevant district and school documents were collected, analyzed, and the findings recorded. After important documents were collected, face-to-face interviews with administrators and teachers were conducted. Finally, focus group sessions were carried out at each school to allow for further investigation into SWPBIS from the SWPBIS team members.

Documents

The first method of data collection for the collective case study was the use of relevant documentation. The researcher collected documents concerning the district's SWPBIS policies and procedures. The researcher then collected relevant documents from each elementary school concerning the individual school's SWPBIS policies, expectations, and rewards. Although the district had set up specific guidelines, each school had created their own specific policies, procedures, expectations, and rewards that are utilized to foster a healthy school climate. In addition to those documents, the researcher collected each school's SWPBIS team meeting minutes.

The majority of the documents were collected electronically and stored in files on the researcher's password-protected computer. However, some documents had to be copied for analysis. The copied documents are safely stored in a secured filing cabinet until it is appropriate to dispose of them. These documents were used to corroborate and augment evidence from the interviews and focus groups (Yin, 2014). They also provided inferences that could lead to further investigation (Yin, 2014) and interview and focus group questions that will allow a more in-depth analysis of the collective case study.

Interviews

The second method of data collection used for the collective case study was face-to-face interviews with administrators and teachers within the MVSS. Interviews are important because they are an essential source concerning human affairs or actions (Yin, 2014) regarding SWPBIS. A face-to-face, semi-structured interview was conducted with administrators who are in charge of discipline. In addition to administrators, three teachers from each elementary school were

interviewed using the same format. The teachers were selected based on grade level by the administrator. During the interview process a kindergarten, third grade, and fifth grade teacher from each elementary school were interviewed.

The face-to-face interviews were scheduled in advance to accommodate the participants' schedule and minimize disruptions to instructional time. Each face-to-face interview was conducted at a quiet setting within the participant's school. The interviews took approximately 30 minutes to one hour to complete and were digitally recorded. The digital recordings were professionally transcribed for analysis purposes. Before the interview began, the researcher specifically discussed the procedures and rationale behind the collective case study, and obtained signatures on all of the required forms.

The interview questions were open-ended, which allowed for multiple realities and differing views (Stake, 1995), and were used to gain a deeper understanding of how participants perceive the SWPBIS framework and its influence on their school climate. The interviews allowed details and stories about the SWPBIS from their own valuable perspective (Patton, 2002). Each interview question was aligned to a research question and supported by the literature. An interview guide containing the interview questions was utilized to ensure that the same basic lines of inquiry were pursued with each participant (Patton, 2002). All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim for data analysis purposes. See Appendix D for the interview questions.

The purpose of the first five interview questions was to collect information that allowed the researcher to gain an understanding of the features of SWPBIS that are perceived as having a positive or negative influence on the school climate. Within a school, individuals may have different perceptions of what features of SWPBIS influence school climate based on their role

and experiences (Booren et al., 2011). Question 1 was designed to see what rewards or reinforcers are utilized with fidelity and to see if identical ones were used by different grade levels. This question provides a foundational knowledge of specific rewards or reinforcers utilized by the schools to help in understanding and assessing the remaining questions.

A SWPBIS framework allows educators to increase their capacity to adopt effective, proactive behavioral strategies that reduce problem behaviors, increase academic success, and promotes a positive school climate (Bradshaw et al., 2012; Gage et al., 2015; Lassen et al., 2006; Marchant et al., 2012; Muscott et al., 2004; Nocera et al., 2014). Questions 2 and 3 were specifically designed to assess the features of SWPBIS that were liked the most and considered to influence the school climate positively. Questions 4 and 5 aimed to assess the features of SWPBIS that were liked the least and considered to influence the school climate negatively. Specific discipline policies or features may have the opposite effect than originally intended and may actually increase inappropriate behavior that are detrimental to the school climate (Han & Akiba, 2011; Muscott et al., 2004; Sharkey & Fenning, 2012; Skiba & Peterson, 2000).

Establishing a safe, healthy school climate that teaches appropriate behaviors has been associated with improved relationships among stakeholders. The relationships between administrators, teachers, and students are an integral part of the school “family” and increase a sense of belonging (Hill & Flores, 2014). Therefore, Questions 6 to 8 were developed to understand how relationships between students and adults in the school have changed since the implementation of SWPBIS.

Specific relationships found within the school environment were addressed in Questions 6 to 8. If a student perceives their school as being unfriendly and unsupportive then they are less

likely to develop positive, healthy relationships with other students and teachers that will result in the likelihood of them not following school rules (Wang et al., 2013). To improve school climate, it is important for SWPBIS to focus on building positive relationships among all stakeholders of the school family (Osman, 2012; Wang et al., 2013). How teachers and administrators feel about their work environment, establish relationships, and feel included are important aspects of a positive school climate (Thapa et al., 2013).

Interview Questions 9 to 12 were designed to explore the perceptions of administrators and teachers on the influence of SWPBIS. Question 9 was included to gain insight into the participants' perceptions of what other school personnel feel about SWPBIS. Teacher perceptions of school climate and self-efficacy influence their belief that they can positively affect student learning and their effectiveness of implementing a SWPBIS framework with fidelity (Kelm & McIntosh, 2012; Thapa et al., 2013). Questions 10 and 11 were specifically developed to gauge the influence of SWPBIS on inappropriate behaviors that affect school climate. Disruptive or inappropriate behaviors influence the relationships between individuals and groups within a school, which affects their perceptions of school climate (Kelm & McIntosh, 2012; Pas & Bradshaw, 2014; Thompson & Webber, 2010). Staff input and buy-in are important factors in the implementation and sustainability of a SWPBIS framework (McIntosh & Miller, 2014; Muscott et al., 2004; Protheroe, 2011). Therefore, Question 12 seeks to understand how administrators and teachers perceive the current features of SWPBIS and in what areas they feel needs to be revised or added.

Focus Groups

The final method of data collection for the collective case study was derived from focus group sessions. A focus group session was conducted at each elementary school, with each focus group consisting of members from the school's SWPBIS team. If an administrator was a member of the SWPBIS team, they did not participate in the focus group, which allowed teachers to answer questions and share their opinions without the presence of their supervisor. This aimed to provide a more open environment that allowed teachers to speak more freely and honestly about their perceptions of SWPBIS and its influence on school climate.

During the focus group sessions, the researcher moderated a discussion about the influence that SWPBIS has on the school climate to try to bring to the surface the views of each person in the group regarding the issue (Yin, 2014). As the moderator for the focus groups it provided an opportunity to gain more insight into the personal perceptions and attitudes toward SWPBIS (Yin, 2014). However, the researcher was cautious not to dominate the focus group and encouraged a balanced and active discussion from participants.

The focus group questions were open-ended and followed a semi-structured format. The open-ended questions fostered talk among the participants specifically about the school's SWPBIS framework (Bogden & Biklen, 2007). These questions were similar in reasoning to the interview questions and sought to validate the other types of data collection. Each focus group question was aligned to a research question and supported by the literature. The focus group sessions lasted approximately 30 minutes to one hour, and they were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy for data analysis. See appendix F for the focus group questions.

The purpose of the first three questions in the focus groups was to gain a better understanding of specific features of SWPBIS that teachers have seen or experienced firsthand that have been effective in decreasing negative behaviors and increasing the fluency of positive behaviors. Rewards and reinforcers are designed to produce an increase in the frequency of desired behaviors and a reduction of frequency of negative behaviors (Betts et al., 2014; Bijou & Baer, 1961; Farmer & Lambright, 2008). Question 1 examined rewards and reinforcers utilized by the school that teachers perceive to be effective features of SWPBIS. The question also allowed teachers to expand on their responses and to discuss their reasoning behind why the rewards and reinforcers were successful.

Focus group Question 2 was developed to expand on Question 1 and allowed teachers to share examples of how the features of SWPBIS are effective from their perspective. Question 3 was developed to comprehend specific features and situations where SWPBIS has not achieved its goals and failed to stop negative or inappropriate behavior from occurring. SWPBIS interventions are designed to prevent problem behaviors by altering a situation before a problem escalates to create a safer, more positive school climate (Safran & Oswald, 2003).

SWPBIS implementation has been shown to enhance social skill development, increase teacher self-efficacy, and significantly improve school climate (Bradshaw et al., 2012; Gage et al., 2015). Specific disciplinary policies can have a positive or negative effect on relationships within a school and might provide a more stressful environment that contributes to an increase in antisocial behavior (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). Therefore, Questions 4 to 6 explored the perceptions of the focus group members of the influence that the SWPBIS has on relationships within the school setting.

Fostering a safe classroom environment leads to meaningful teaching and learning opportunities that help students reach their full potential (Holloman & Yates, 2012). Schools that have implemented a SWPBIS framework have been shown to have improved student-student and student-teacher interactions (Brandt et al., 2014). The school climate is influenced by formal and informal relationships, personalities of participants, and leadership in the organization (Osman, 2012). Those questions sought to understand how implementing SWBPIS had changed relationships during structured and unstructured settings throughout the school and between different stakeholders.

Focus group Questions 7 to 10 were designed to explore the perceptions of administrators and teachers on the influence of SWPBIS. Specifically, Questions 7 to 9 sought to understand what teachers perceive as the thoughts, beliefs, and actions of other teachers and the administrators towards the school's SWPBIS. In certain situations, some teachers may believe that positive reinforcement for appropriate behaviors is not the best solution to behavior management and is detrimental to the school climate (Matthews et al., 2014). Question 9 sought to gain a better understanding of teachers' perceptions of SWPBIS and its influence on the overall school climate. When teachers have a more positive perception of the school climate then they also have higher perceptions of their administrators and students (Debnam et al., 2011; Pas & Bradshaw, 2014; Thapa et al., 2013).

It is important for schools to engage teachers in ongoing dialogue about the SWPBIS framework to see what they think should be improved and what they would include to increase its effectiveness and sustainability (George et al., 2007). Teacher evaluations and suggestions regarding the SWPBIS framework are valuable in designing features that will meet the needs of a specific school. Therefore, the last question (Question 10) sought to discover what features

teachers would modify, add, or delete to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of SWPBIS.

Data Analysis

The purpose of this collective case study was to explore and understand administrators' and teachers' perceptions on how a SWPBIS framework influences school climate at the elementary school level. All data and analysis was carefully and purposely organized throughout the study. During the data collection process, the researcher began to search for patterns, insights, or concepts that appeared promising (Yin, 2014) to help understand the phenomenon. The data was thoroughly reviewed and the researcher became very familiar with the details. This allowed the researcher to understand the breadth of the data in its entirety to identify reoccurring categories. The researcher then searched for evidence to support the categories from the different databases utilized in the research study (Creswell, 2013), which provided a rich and detailed information foundation.

According to Patton (2002), coding refers to analyzing the core content of interviews and observations to determine what the significance is. In the present study, by searching for significance and meaning, patterns within certain conditions were identified (Stake, 1995). The first step in the data analysis involved reading through all pertinent documents, face-to-face interview transcriptions, and focus group transcriptions. During this step, the researcher conducted a search for data regularities and patterns (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) to create a broad, initial list of codes. After this step was completed, a new reading of the collected data began a more formal coding (Patton, 2002) and the initial list of codes was narrowed to focus on the purpose of the collective case study.

Once the codes were identified and categorized, the researcher then created a table for each research question and mechanically sorted the coding categories (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The categories that were identified as important or central themes for each research question were the headings in each table. The data from each elementary school that belonged to each central category were included in the appropriate column. Some data appeared in more than one column. In addition, the data source was color coded to distinguish itself from the other sources. The tables helped the researcher seek a linkage between program structure, features, and outcomes (Stake, 1995). This also allowed the researcher to identify the common themes or patterns that emerged that showed to what extent a SWPBIS framework influences school climate from the perspectives of administrators and teachers.

The next step in the data analysis process was to add another column to each table to track the number of times that each category was mentioned or discussed in the documents, face-to-face interview transcripts, and focus group transcripts. According to Stake (1995), there are times where single instances will provide significance but usually the more important meanings will come from repeated reappearance. The completion of these steps produced a framework for organizing and describing what had been collected and allowed the researcher to extract meaning from the data, make comparisons, and draw conclusions (Patton, 2002) for each research question. The researcher then reviewed all data and conclusions, gathered new data if available, and deliberately sought disconfirmation of the findings (Stake, 1995) to help ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the collective case study.

Trustworthiness

It was important that the collective case research study did not distort the data to serve the researcher's personal interests and biases (Patton, 2002). To ensure the trustworthiness of the

research study triangulation, member checking, and peer review were utilized. Triangulation was achieved by using and coding multiple sources of data collected from interviews, focus groups, and documents. The use of several sources of information that followed a similar convergence made the collective case study more convincing and accurate (Yin, 2014). Through member checking, the researcher had an opportunity to solicit participants' views of the credibility of the findings (Creswell, 2013). The participants had the opportunity to examine the transcripts of their interview responses to ensure that misinterpretations did not occur. The peer review provided an external check of the research process (Creswell, 2013) to ensure the integrity and accuracy of the research.

Credibility

Credibility is imperative to ensure the findings of the research study accurately capture and describe reality. To ensure credibility an extensive amount of data was collected through documents, face-to-face interviews, and focus groups for analysis. The incorporation and description of relevant research literature grounded the research questions and showed the importance of the collective case study (Yin, 2014). During the research study, the researcher remained neutral and sought honest, meaningful, and credible findings (Patton, 2002). Analyzing the depth of information from a neutral perspective allowed the administrators' and teachers' perceptions of SWPBIS to be accurately illuminated, therefore giving the findings of the collective case study credibility.

Dependability

The triangulation of data collected from interviews, focus groups, and document analysis provided reliability to the findings and conclusions of the collective case study. This research

study used multiple methods to collect different types of data, which strengthened the confidence in the conclusions obtained (Patton, 2002). The utilization of multiple sources of data strengthened the construct validity and provided multiple measures of the same phenomenon (Yin, 2014). The collective case study also systematically followed the procedures to ensure consistency among data collection and data analysis from each elementary school.

Transferability

To ensure transferability of the collective case study, it was imperative to describe accurately in detail the setting, participants, and procedures. It was also important that the methods for data collection and data analysis were clearly and systematically indicated so that future research can replicate this collective case study. This allowed for the degree of transferability to be determined between the collective case study and another setting in which the school district had implemented SWPBIS.

Ethical Considerations

Because of the nature of the collective case study and the utilization of human subjects as participants, ethical considerations were essential. The study of a contemporary phenomenon of SWPBIS in elementary schools in north Georgia obligated the researcher to follow important ethical practices akin to those followed in medical research (Yin, 2014). Formal approval from Liberty University's Institutional Review Board was granted before any research data was collected. To ensure research integrity, the researcher gained informed consent before any interviews or focus groups were conducted (Yin, 2014). The participants were completely informed about the purpose and nature of the collective case study. The participants were also informed about the data collection procedures and data security. In addition, the researcher

adhered to the ethical standards approved by the American Educational Research Association (Yin, 2014). Participants were able to opt out of the collective case research study at any time.

Summary

The research design of this qualitative study was identified as a collective case study. The rationale for using a collective case study design was clearly articulated and appropriate justification was declared. The setting and participants were identified along with the rationale for why the setting was chosen for the research study. Data was collected from three sources during the study and data analysis procedures were discussed. The procedures to strengthen the trustworthiness of the collective case study were outlined. The chapter was concluded by identifying and addressing ethical considerations of the collective case study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

In this chapter, an in-depth look at the data analysis and findings of the collective case study are discussed. First, the participants are described in detail and a description of the process for identifying themes is presented. Second, the themes and sub-themes are discussed in detail. Finally, the results are presented as they relate to the central question and subquestions that guided the collective case study.

The purpose of this collective case study was to explore and understand administrators' and teachers' perceptions on how a SWPBIS framework influences school climate at the elementary school level. The central research question seeks to examine the influence of SWPBIS on school climate from the perspective of administrators and teachers. Subquestions 1 and 2 seek to identify the features of a SWPBIS framework that have a positive or negative influence on school climate at the elementary level. Subquestion 3 seeks to understand how implementing a SWPBIS framework has influenced the relationships within the school environment. Finally, subquestion 4 seeks to identify and understand how administrators and teachers perceive the effectiveness of SWPBIS.

The rationale for designing this research study with the central research question and subquestions stems from a lack of literature examining administrators' and teachers' perceptions of a SWPBIS framework and its influence on school climate. The available literature indicates that staff commitment and buy-in are essential features in the implementation and sustainability of SWPBIS (Coffey & Horner, 2012; George et al., 2007; McIntosh et al., 2014; Nocera et al., 2014). However, the problem exists in the fact that the current literature shows discrepancies between researchers' and school personnel's perceptions of a SWPBIS framework (McIntosh,

Predy, et al., 2014). A lack of research into the perceptions of administrators and teachers was what necessitated the present research study. A qualitative research design and methodology was appropriate for the collective case study because the data collected was rich in description of people, places, and phenomena that are not easily handled by statistical procedures (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

For the collective case study, data was collected from relevant documentation, face-to-face interviews, and focus group sessions. Following the collection of relevant documentation, participants were asked to participate in a semi-structured face-to-face interview or a focus group session. Purposeful sampling was utilized and the selected participants provided their own experiences based on their role within the organizational structure of the elementary school. From these data sources, data was initially coded to determine broad themes and then refined to reveal the final themes as presented in the results of this chapter.

Participants

Within this collective case study, each participant met the criteria of being currently employed in an elementary school that has implemented SWPBIS and is in the MVSS. This participant selection allowed the study to research the central phenomenon of SWPBIS through the experiences of various personnel with differing roles within each of the schools. The use of purposeful sampling allowed participants to share their experiences within the school to expand the knowledge base of information to answer the research questions of this collective case study.

The administrator in charge of discipline and a teacher from kindergarten, third grade, and fifth grade from each school agreed to participate in the present research study. They were interviewed independently in accordance with the case study interview protocol (Appendix E). The teachers that were interviewed were not members of the SWPBIS team and therefore not

part of the focus group sessions. Members in the SWPBIS team at each selected elementary school agreed to participate in a focus group session. A focus group protocol (Appendix G) was utilized to ensure consistency throughout all of the focus group sessions. The interview and focus group protocol informed the participants of the purpose of the case study, the involvement needed from each participant, and efforts to protect their confidentiality. Before conducting any interviews or focus group sessions, each participant read and signed an informed consent form (Appendix C).

Each of the participants in the research study was given a pseudonym to protect the real identity of the participants and to ensure the final case report would not affect the subsequent actions of those that were studied (Yin, 2014) or their superiors. The sample size for the collective case study was 37 participants, which allowed for multiple realities of SWPBIS and increased the trustworthiness of the study. Appendix H presents the demographic information of the participants in terms of position, years in education, highest degree earned, gender, and ethnicity. Each of the participants that participated in the semi-structured, face-to-face interviews is described in more detail in the following narratives.

Alexander

Alexander is the PBIS Coordinator at NES, and is responsible for leading the SWPBIS team, data collection, and evaluating policies in a focused effort to sustain a successful SWPBIS. He has been at NES his entire education career and in his current position for 4 years. Alexander is a Caucasian male and has earned a specialist degree in leadership. He strives to stay positive and focuses on what students are doing right to help them feel welcomed and loved. Additionally, he indicated that he wants to help teachers and students develop into successful life-long learners so everyone can improve each year.

Sharon

Sharon is currently a kindergarten teacher at NES. She is a Caucasian female and has earned a master's degree in early childhood education. Sharon has spent all of her 17 years in education at NES. During this time, she has taught second grade for 2 years and kindergarten for the last 15 years. She believes that the younger children really want to do well and can reach high expectations. She was quick to emphasize that creating a classroom sense of community is crucial to establishing a positive learning environment where the students feel safe to take risks.

Elizabeth

Elizabeth is a Caucasian female that is currently teaching third grade at NES, where she has taught for 6 years but 2015-2016 is her first year teaching third grade. Previously she was a first grade teacher. Elizabeth has earned her bachelor's degree in early childhood education. She quickly explained how third grade is different from first grade but that the children still get excited about rewards and work hard to earn them. Changing grade levels has helped her realize the importance of consistency and having clear expectations. Elizabeth feels that you have to be always thinking of new ideas to make learning and school fun to really engage the children.

Sandy

Sandy is a Caucasian female that is currently a fifth grade teacher at NES. She has been in education for 4 years and the last three years she has been in her current position at NES. Her first year in the classroom she taught third grade. Sandy has earned a bachelor's degree in early childhood education but her highest degree is a master's degree in curriculum and instruction. She quickly revealed that she started working with children during her senior year in high school as a youth apprenticeship student and that experience inspired her to become a teacher. Her love

for children and passion for teaching has pushed her to step out of her comfort zone and be more involved in the fun reward days.

Hillary

Hillary is the PBIS Coordinator at PES, where she is responsible for leading the SWPBIS team, data collection, and evaluating policies in a focused effort to sustain a successful SWPBIS. She has been in education for 13 years and has been in her current position for 4 years at PES. Hillary is a Caucasian female and has earned a specialist degree in leadership. Hillary said that PES is vastly different from the larger, urbanized school that she worked at previously. She now feels that she is part of a happy school family. Hillary takes great pride in overseeing SWPBIS and feels she is truly making a difference in the lives of the students.

Robyn

Robyn is a Caucasian female that is currently a kindergarten teacher at PES. She has been in education for 15 years and all of those years have been in her current position at PES. Robyn has earned her master's degree in early childhood education. Robyn was proud that she has been a part of PES for her entire teaching career and plans on staying until she decides to retire. She indicated that the teachers and other adults in the school set a positive example in the way they speak to each other, walk in the hallways, and perform nice acts for others. Robyn did admit that she was a little skeptical of SWPBIS at first but once she saw the good things that started happening around her school she jumped onboard.

Sarah

Sarah is a Caucasian female and is currently a third grade teacher at PES. She has been in education for 11 years and has been in her current position for 3 years at PES. Sarah has earned her bachelor's degree in early childhood education. Sarah has taught many grades throughout her

career and this has given her a variety of experiences. Besides teaching third grade, she has also taught kindergarten, first grade, second grade, and early intervention prevention classes. She said that her career has never been boring and that she has had to constantly learn new strategies and content. However, she feels that because of her wide experiences she understands where her third graders are coming from and how to help them achieve the things they need to achieve.

April

April is a Caucasian female and is currently a fifth grade teacher at PES. She has been in education for 6 years and has been in her current position for one year. Before this year, she was a special education teacher working with children in a co-taught setting. April has earned a bachelor's degree in early childhood education but her highest degree is a master's degree in mathematics. She expressed that she has close ties to the community and works hard to help her students learn the right things so they can become responsible adults. She believes instilling positive character traits will help children learn more and give them a brighter future.

Martha

Martha is the PBIS Coordinator at WES, where she is responsible for leading the SWPBIS team, data collection, and evaluating policies in a focused effort to sustain a successful SWPBIS. She has been in education for 20 years, all at WES, and has been in her current position for 12 years. Martha is a Caucasian female and has earned a specialist degree in administration. She quickly pointed out that she has seen many changes during her time in the classroom and as an administrator. She emphasized how students have changed during her years in education and believes that SWPBIS is needed to help reach every child. She works hard to make sure that all students are being recognized and motivated to do the right thing. In her administrator role, Martha is now seeing some children who were her students that she taught in

elementary school. She believes this has given her more insight into the lives of those students and works diligently to strengthen the relationship between school and home.

June

June is a Caucasian female and is currently teaching kindergarten at WES. She has been in education for 7 years and has been in her current position for 6 years at WES. Before teaching kindergarten, she was a fourth grade language arts teacher. June's highest degree earned is a specialist degree in early childhood education. She believes that her role as a kindergarten teacher is one of the most important jobs in education. June indicated that kindergarten is the foundation that all the other grades build on. One of her main roles is to make sure that her children not only know how to read and write but how to think critically and behave. She said that the building blocks her students obtain in her class will follow them all the way through school and the rest of their lives.

Marley

Marley is a Caucasian female and is currently a third grade teacher at WES. She has been in education for 5 years and has been in her current position for four years at WES. Marley has earned a bachelor's degree in early childhood education but her highest degree is a specialist degree in technology and learning. Marley grew up in the county where she now lives and teaches. She takes great pride in coming back home and helping her students just as some of her teachers helped her along the way. She further revealed that WES still has that family feel and it is a little weird at times to be a peer with some of her elementary school teachers. Marley feels she has learned a lot in her 4 years at WES and has enjoyed being part of a SWPBIS school.

Saige

Saige is a Caucasian female and is currently a fifth grade teacher at WES. She has been in education for 23 years, teaching at WES for the past 19 years, and in her current position at WES for 6 years. Saige has earned a bachelor's degree in early childhood education but her highest degree is a specialist degree in curriculum and instruction. Even though she said she is not a young teacher anymore, she still gets excited about doing fun rewards with her students. Saige communicated that she thinks it is important for students to see their teachers excited and having fun with learning. She indicated that her students watch her and feed off her excitement. She also revealed that she was part of SWPBIS when the system first began and that WES has really grown and improved as a school since this implementation.

Nelson Elementary School (NES) Focus Group

The NES focus group consisted of members of the school's PBIS team. Seven participants took part in the focus group session and answered 10 open-ended discussion questions. The NES focus group was comprised of content area teachers, a counselor, a special education paraprofessional, an academic coach, and a parent liaison. The number of years of experience in education ranged from 2 years to 24 years with a mean of 7.7 years. The educational level of the NES focus group consisted of three members that had earned their specialist degree, one who had earned their master's degree, one who had earned their bachelor's degree, and two that had earned a high school diploma. Five of the seven participants were female and all were Caucasian. The participants of the NES focus group are described in more detail in the following narratives.

Brittney

Brittney has been the counselor at NES for the past 3 years and has earned a specialist degree in counseling. Brittney has seen the numerous positive outcomes of SWPBIS and enjoys being able to help create character education lessons. She wants to see more community members become mentors to help the students see positive role models. Brittney values the time she is able to spend in classrooms working with students. She feels that her job is challenging, but helping students, teachers, and families is worth it.

Christine

Christine has been actively involved at NES as a parent volunteer until becoming a special education paraprofessional 4 years ago. Christine has earned her high school diploma and she indicated that she has a passion for working with children. She feels she has a different perspective than the other members of the SWPBIS team and can relate to some students easier, which results in creating positive relationships. She feels that she helps to keep the SWPBIS expectations and lessons simple so all students can understand them.

Connie

Connie has been in education for 9 years, all at NES, but this is her first year as academic coach. She has earned a master's degree in curriculum and instruction. Connie indicated that she feels blessed to have an opportunity to help teachers throughout the school make a difference in the lives of their students. She works hard to provide teachers with the support and resources they need not only for the content area they teach but also for teaching expectations. Connie feels that having been a classroom teacher for eight years helps her understand the demands and pressures that are placed on classroom teachers. She strives to find new strategies and resources

to help alleviate that burden so the teachers can focus on making deeper personal connections with their students.

Diana

Diana has been a part of NES for the entire 11 years of her teaching career, teaching second grade exclusively. Diana loves serving on the SWPBIS team because it provides her with the opportunity to problem solve and be creative in designing rewards. She loves her current job but plans on becoming an administrator later in her career. She currently holds a specialist degree in leadership. Diana feels that serving on the SWPBIS team has been a valuable experience and will help her in the future.

Marlene

Marlene is a parent liaison on the NES SWPBIS team. She holds a high school diploma and, before staying home 2 years ago, spent 13 years as a data clerk at the high school. Marlene plainly indicated that she believes children do not learn character and positive behaviors from their families as they did when she was growing up. She said she wants to be active in her child's school and wants to help other children learn how to act appropriately. Marlene believes this will make their community stronger and future brighter.

Micah

Micah is a fourth grade science and social studies teacher who has been in education for 24 years. He holds a specialist degree in administration and was an assistant principal for 2 years. He felt that being in administration was not what he was meant to do, so he moved back into the classroom. He feels that students, families, and society have changed a lot in the last 20 years. Micah believes that there have been some positive changes but he feels that there has also been a

negative change in discipline and respect. He indicated that is why he supports SWPBIS and hopes that it continues to help children make good choices.

Timothy

This is Timothy's first year as a physical education (P.E.) teacher at NES but he was a P.E. teacher in another district for 14 years prior. He said there is a major change in his role at NES from the other district and he feels that SWPBIS is the reason. Timothy said that he now feels included in school decisions, school teams, and as a part of the NES family. He said he no longer feels he is on an island and doing his own thing.

Potomac Elementary School (PES) Focus Group

The PES focus group consisted of members of the school's PBIS team. Seven participants took part in the focus group session and answered 10 open-ended discussion questions. The PES focus group was comprised of content area teachers, a counselor, and a special education teacher. The number of years of experience in education ranged from 10 years to 33 years with a mean of 19.4 years. The educational level of the PES focus group consisted of three members that had earned their specialist degree and four who had earned their master's degree. Six of the seven participants were female and all were Caucasian. The participants of the PES focus group are described in detail in the following narratives.

Ashley

Ashley has spent 33 years in education, but her last 13 years have been as a special education teacher at PES. This is her first year on the SWPBIS team. She expressed that she was skeptical of SWPBIS at first, but after seeing how much her students' behavior improved, she is now a believer. Ashley joked about being the grandmother or the old lady on the team, but thinks that her experience is beneficial in making decisions. During her time in education, she has seen

several academic and behavior programs and that has helped her understand those ones that are likely to be successful and those ones that are likely to be ineffective. Even though she has invested 33 years in the field of education, she has no plans of retiring anytime soon.

Carol

Carol is a first grade teacher and has been at PES since it opened. She indicated that during her 27 years in education she has undertaken dozens of classroom management plans. Carol has been on the SWPBIS team for 3 years. She believes that schools must teach more quality character traits than they have in the past. Carol indicated that being deliberate in teaching character traits is one the most important features of SWPBIS. Carol acknowledged that even though she loves teaching, she plans to retire in three more years.

Jodi

Jodi is in her 17th year as a kindergarten teacher and she has been at PES for her entire teaching career. Jodi brings an interesting perspective to the SWPBIS team, because she was on the original SWPBIS team for a few years before rotating off and now she has rotated back on. Jodi communicated that the use of data and data analysis has been one of the biggest changes since she the SWPBIS first started.

Katie

Katie has been in education for 25 years, with this being her 15th year teaching second grade at PES. She has earned a specialist degree in early childhood education and loves being in the classroom. She has served on the SWPBIS team for 2 years and values the opportunities that the students have because of the rewards. She indicated that some children would not have the chance to go on some of the trips, enjoy fun days, or have someone else show interest in them

outside of their classroom teacher. Katie also believes that SWPBIS has helped the relationship between the school and home environments.

Kay

Kay is in her 10th year as a fifth grade teacher at PES. She is a graduate of the MVSS and is proud to teach in her hometown. She has been on the SWPBIS team for 2 years. Kay believes that SWPBIS has helped bring the school together but acknowledges that there are distinct differences between the upper and lower grades. In fifth grade, she feels that you can see the students learning real life economic lessons as they decide what to do with their school money. Kay thinks that teaching practical lessons that the students will be able to apply when they become adults is a valuable endeavor.

Peter

As the counselor at PES for thirteen years, Peter has worked with a variety of administrators, teachers, students, and parents. He believes that creating a system that is effective and makes a difference is vital to earning support. He spends a lot of time trying to work with people in the community to become mentors, provide financial support for rewards, and to participate in reward days. Peter also believes that seeing the difference in students' behavior is a powerful tool that can motivate and inspire others. He wants to try to leave the biggest impact on the students and help them have the capabilities to overcome obstacles they will face in the future.

Wanda

Wanda is currently serving her second year on the SWPBIS team. She has taught third grade at PES for 11 years. Wanda believes all children are precious and third grade is when they really start growing up. Wanda feels her personality is best suited for using positive

reinforcements to change behavior rather than yelling. However, she did say she had a stern look and her kids know she is serious when she uses it. Wanda revealed that she wants to see every child rewarded for something positive but admitted it is tougher to find the good in some of her students.

Washington Elementary School (WES) Focus Group

The WES focus group consisted of members of the school's PBIS team. Eleven participants took part in the focus group session and answered 10 open-ended discussion questions. The WES focus group was comprised of content area teachers, a counselor, a special education teacher, a music teacher, and an academic coach. The number of years of experience in education ranged from 4 years to 28 years with a mean of 13.8 years. The educational level of the WES focus group consisted of seven members that had earned their specialist degree, three that had earned their master's degree, and one that had earned their bachelor's degree. Ten of the eleven participants were female and all were Caucasian. The participants of the WES focus are described in detail in the following narratives.

Andrea

Andrea was a fourth grade teacher for 3 years and then decided to stay at home for 12 years. This is her first year back in the classroom and she currently teaches fifth grade. During her time at home, she completed her specialist degree in early childhood education. This helped her maintain current knowledge in educational trends and she became familiar with SWPBIS during her studies. Andrea is excited to be back in the classroom and serve on the SWPBIS team. She said that it has been a major adjustment going back to work but SWPBIS has made the transition easier.

Anita

Anita is in her fourth year as the WES music teacher. Anita earned her bachelor's degree in early childhood education but later changed to music education. She communicated that she started teaching music to younger children and that it stole her heart. She enjoys to incorporating other content into her music classes and works closely with students so that they learn as much as they can. Anita feels that learning music can help students make connections with information and that it can carry over into their other classes. She said she tries hard to work with all the teachers and grade levels to see how she can best help them teach their students through music.

Beth

Beth started her teaching career over 20 years ago in another school district in south Georgia. She moved to north Georgia and is finishing her fifth year in the MVSS teaching fourth grade. During her career, Beth has been part of other SWPBIS teams and she feels that her experience helps the team see what other schools have done successfully or unsuccessfully. Even though she is not a native to the county, she feels that working in a SWPBIS school has helped her make connections and build relationships throughout the county more easily. Beth would like to see WES utilize more technology to keep track of behavior and school money, thus making SWPBIS more effective and easier to use.

Bryan

Bryan has been in the MVSS for 20 years and an academic coach at WES for the last decade. Before he became an academic coach, he was a fifth grade mathematics teacher. He expressed that he loves numbers and really focuses on analyzing data to help drive instruction and to design behavior policies. Bryan believes that data is a key component in a successful SWPBIS but that teachers must work to build constructive relationships with students, families,

and other school personnel. He said he works hard to keep teachers updated on current trends and is willing to help teachers in any way he can so they can have more time and energy to invest in their students. He misses the classroom but feels he is making a difference as an academic coach.

Heather

Heather has been a special education teacher for 13 years and has earned her specialist degree in curriculum and instruction. She holds high expectations for her students but realizes that for some of them to reach their potential academically they must manage their behavior better. She incorporates lessons on character and making good choices in addition to having a completely functioning PBIS classroom. Heather said she praises her students and is very consistent in rewarding behavior. She feels that the extra support her students receive from SWPBIS and in her classroom has had a positive impact on their behavior and academic progress.

Kathy

Kathy is currently a second grade teacher and has been in education for 16 years, during which time she has also taught kindergarten. Kathy has been on the SWPBIS team for 3 years and feels that her experiences in teaching different grade levels has helped her have a better understanding of the developmental age of the students within the school. She did confess that she is more familiar with younger students than students in the upper grades. Kathy feels that she can speak for the lower grades and provide guidance from that perspective.

Laura

Laura is the school counselor but she actually started her career in the mental health industry. As the school counselor, she has the opportunity to work with a large variety of

students and their families. She feels that she has a solid understanding of the majority of the students and can provide guidance on creating reasonable expectations, selecting desired rewards, and how to communicate with parents. Laura believes that it is important that each of the elementary schools work together, be consistent, and share ideas. She has worked diligently to create open lines of communication with other schools and the central office, and she believes that even though each school is unique, they are all part of one school district with the same goals.

Lynn

Lynn has been a special education teacher for 5 years at WES but has had other careers before teaching. She has worked in the financial sector and service industry before realizing her desire to become a teacher. Lynn feels that she brings a unique perspective to teaching because of her different careers. She emphasizes that students need to learn skills and character traits that will help them thrive and adapt in a working environment. She believes that instilling a strong work ethic, sense of responsibility, and high level of respect is just as important as teaching them their ABCs.

Melissa

Melissa is a veteran teacher with 28 years in education. She currently teaches third grade and has earned her specialist degree in leadership. Melissa said she had planned to become an administrator but just could not leave the classroom. Even though she has been teaching for 28 years she still gets excited about teaching and enjoys her students. Melissa admitted that she was reluctant to incorporate SWPBIS into the classroom and wanted to hold on to what she felt comfortable with. However, she said as she watched other teachers she realized it could benefit her students and make her classroom management easier.

Shauna

Shauna has been a kindergarten teacher for 8 years. She is a graduate of MVSS and after college returned to teach at the same elementary school that she attended. She revealed that it was weird at times to work with teachers she had in elementary school. This is her first year on the SWPBIS team and she is excited to learn about how other grade levels use SWPBIS. Shauna feels that she has an extremely important job because she is building the foundation for the other grades. She confessed that it is stressful but if her students understand the expectations and the power of making good choices it will help them for the rest of their lives.

Tamara

Tamara has been in education for 23 years. She has mainly taught first grade but has also been an administrator. She feels that being an administrator helped her understand another side of education and gave her time to evaluate what high-quality teaching looks like. Tamara came to the realization that she wanted to be a teacher and moved back into the classroom. She feels that she has been able to incorporate what she learned as an administrator into her teaching but also as a member of the SWPBIS team. She has been on the SWPBIS team for 4 years and hopes to continue serving on the team as long as she can.

Results

The research process included analysis of relevant documents, in-depth interviews, and focus group sessions. The results of this collective case study are presented by discussing the themes that emerged and how they answered the research question and subquestions. This section discusses how the themes were identified and developed during the data analysis and coding process. Each theme and sub-theme is then discussed to show how they merged to answer the research questions.

Theme Identification

During the data analysis process, data was analyzed to identify patterns and codes. Themes emerged from these patterns and codes that were identified from the data collected. The individual codes with the frequency of occurrence for the three data collection methods are found in Appendix I. Appendix J contains a chart of how each code was classified into the themes, while Appendix K contains a chart that denotes how each code within an emerged theme was classified into sub-themes. Each of the themes and sub-themes are discussed in the next section as they merge to answer the research questions for this collective case study.

After the data was collected, the pertinent documents and transcripts were reviewed to identify any regular patterns or codes. From this analysis, a broad, initial list of codes was created. The initial list of codes was analyzed and narrowed down to codes that focused on the purpose of this collective case study. The search for codes and thorough review of the data illuminated concepts that helped identify reoccurring categories (Yin, 2014). The initial list of codes was organized under 74 different categories. However, it was determined that these 74 categories were too broad and failed to provide focus toward clearly organizing the description of codes. Therefore, the categories were combined and narrowed to code the collected data in search of emerging themes more effectively. Another round of review and analysis was conducted and 31 codes were collected and organized in an Excel spreadsheet. These codes are listed in Appendix I.

The collected data was reviewed one more time, which ensured that the appropriate data source was listed and no significant data was overlooked during the initial data analysis. In addition, another column was added to the Excel spreadsheet that denoted whether the statements by the participants had a positive or negative connotation. The codes and significant statements

were then clustered into categories noting similarities and differences among the responses of the participants. The identification of the categories was influenced by the review of literature, which helped to detect themes.

After the categories were reviewed and it was determined that all of the codes had been placed in the proper category, promising themes were discovered. The emerging themes were incentives, consistency, school climate, mindset, support, challenges, and relationships. Each of the 31 codes was assigned to one of these seven themes. Another study and analysis of the data revealed a linkage between the themes and codes. From this analysis, the seven themes were narrowed down to four themes. The final themes that emerged were incentives influence behaviors, consistency builds community, mindset impacts relationships, and support and challenges shape program perceptions. Appendix J illustrates how each code was assigned to one of these four themes.

All the collected data was revisited to ensure that it was coded correctly and the codes were aligned with the themes. As each individual code within a theme was reviewed, sub-themes were discovered. The sub-themes that emerged revealed in detail how the codes meshed, which allowed meaning to be extracted from the collected data to answer each research question. Appendix K documents how the sub-themes and codes align with the themes. Another review of data was conducted and it was determined that all collected data was coded correctly, each theme and sub-theme was accurate, and the conclusions were valid.

Recurring Themes

Four essential themes emerged from the analysis process that identified a link between program structure, features, and outcomes that describe administrators' and teachers' perception of a SWPBIS framework. The four themes were: (a) incentives influence behaviors, (b)

consistency builds community, (c) mindset impacts relationships, and (d) support and challenges shape program perceptions. The themes are consistent with relevant literature regarding SWPBIS and connect to provide answers to each research question. Based on the qualitative case study design of this study, the following section provides a narrative of each theme and sub-theme supported by appropriate data and how the identified themes answer each research question.

Incentives influence behaviors.

This was the first theme that emerged during the data analysis process. Incentives and consistent reinforcements increase desired behaviors or decrease negative behaviors (Wheatley et al., 2009) thereby influencing the surrounding environment. The use of frequent rewards not only shapes the behavior of students but the behavior of teachers and administrators as well.

Throughout the data analysis process, four distinct sub-themes were identified within the main theme. The four distinct sub-themes were (a) rewards, (b) recognition and appreciation, (c) focus on the positives, and (d) motivation.

Rewards.

The SWPBIS mission at each elementary school that participated in the collective case study is to establish a positive, supportive, and safe learning environment based on the three R's. The three R's are be respectful, be responsible, and be ready to learn. Each of the elementary schools have chosen a money/points program to acknowledge students for their positive behavior and for providing support to students who have difficulty with positive behavior. Each elementary school's money/points program is applied to all students, staff, and settings within the school environment. The money or points can be used to purchase rewards on a daily, monthly, nine-week term, or yearly basis. Each elementary school has devised a SWPBIS program that provides a variety of rewards with a wide range of frequency. Smaller rewards may

be purchased more frequently, while the larger rewards are only available at specific times or on a limited schedule throughout the school year.

Relevant documents along with each interview and focus group session emphasized the use of rewards and how they influence the behavior of students and staff. Alexander, administrator at NES, indicated, “Getting school money is our daily reward but we do something school-wide that is different and that everybody gets to be involved in unless they don’t have enough school money.” He continued, “And then our grade levels get to choose their own rewards and how often they reward their students. Students can spend their school money on a tangible (e.g., toy) item, read to a teacher, have lunch with an adult in the building, or to shadow an adult in the building for an hour.” At the beginning of the school year, students have the opportunity to complete a survey that provides the SWPBIS team data on what rewards the students’ desire.

The varying level of rewards provides an opportunity to receive immediate gratification and helps students learn to be patient and to plan for bigger, yet infrequent, rewards. Martha, administrator at WES, explained that “Students have to save up their school money for weekly, monthly, and yearly rewards. The more they want the reward the more incentive they have to work harder to earn it.” Hillary, administrator at PES, believes,

A daily reward system allows the teachers to provide the kids a response to what the kids are doing right and doing correctly. The rewards help kids identify what they are supposed to be doing and understanding there are positive consequences for it. This has improved behavior and cuts down on discipline.

During the focus group session at WES, Melissa communicated that, because of the variety of rewards “you can find a spark in almost any kid.”

The WES focus group emphasized the importance of variety and frequency in positively influencing behaviors. Bryan declared that by “having a huge list of coupons and being able to tailor it for their grade level works well.” Further discussions highlighted that rewards are perceived differently at different grade levels. Tamara, a first grade teacher and member of the WES focus group, indicated that “younger kids respond better to more immediate and tangible rewards.” Brittney, counselor at NES, expressed that “over the years we’ve had to alter our rewards to differentiate for younger grade levels and older grade levels.” In the interview with Sandy, she discussed the various rewards that their school uses and thinks that the variety “keeps the students interested and excited so they want to earn that money or points.”

Members of the PES focus group acknowledged that having a reward system that utilized incentives do influence behaviors. Katie, a second grade teacher, indicated “When you reward the positive behaviors others see it and want that incentive too. It encourages more positive behaviors and fosters a more positive climate.” Jodi, a kindergarten teacher, was quick to add that “as soon as you start handing out the money the kids start being good.” Carol, first grade teacher, extended the discussion by talking about not only can you reward individuals but “there’s a whole class reward” that can be used that influences group behaviors. Overall, the rewards are viewed as a tool to positively impact behaviors of individual students and larger groups of students.

Although rewards were perceived as having a positive influence on behaviors in the majority of cases, there were some reservations about the effectiveness of rewards and the long-term consequences on students. Andrea expressed her concern that with SWPBIS you are simply “trying to find something to reward the student for even though it may be for something that doesn’t warrant a reward.” The PES focus group recalled a situation that occurred the year before

that created negative feelings regarding rewards and fostered a sense that incentives are not fair. Peter described it as,

At our end of the year reward celebration, the students got to put in their school money in a drawing for some big prizes. Some kids who were perfect all year long had hundreds of school dollars and won nothing. This one student who had been in trouble all year long and was well known for being a trouble maker won two big prizes. You could see the other kids thinking I know he's been in trouble all year and he's been to the office constantly, but he wins two big prizes and I've done my best all year long and I got nothing. Even though he was rewarded because he was showing good behavior, he just got lucky because his name was drawn.

Wanda continued discussing the situation and said "the other kids really didn't understand why he was allowed to win not one but two big prizes when they didn't get rewarded at all." She also believes that this set a negative precedent and reinforced the idea that "I can be in trouble and in the office a lot but can still win and not have to be good."

Another concern expressed about rewards is that rewards do not fully prepare them for the real world and may create a sense of false entitlement. Sharon explained it as,

You know when you're driving down the road going the speed limit. A police officer doesn't stop you and say good job for going the speed limit. You don't get rewarded for doing what is expected and following the rules all of the time. And so if you constantly reward kids for doing what they are supposed to do then it gives them a false reality. The policeman is going to pull you over and give you a ticket for speeding not following the speed limit. And so you start thinking as a teacher, why should I reward them for doing what they're supposed to do.

Other teachers revealed similar sentiments and concerns about creating a false sense of reality. Jodi shared that “there are certain things in my job that I’m required to do. It is expected and part of my duties and if I don’t do them then I get fired. I worry that kids will grow up and expect rewards for every little thing without truly realizing the consequences if they don’t do it.”

Recognition and appreciation.

One of the best things about SWPBIS according to Martha is that it “recognizes students for good behaviors and motivates those who have a little trouble seeing good role models.” Another key benefit of SWPBIS that Martha pointed out is that the “students who are quiet and rarely do anything wrong aren’t overlooked. It makes sure that everyone is noticed and recognized for their behavior.” Saige, a fifth grade teacher at WES, revealed the same sentiments, “We are able to let the kids who have achieved really good behaviors know that we notice and we can acknowledge them in some way.” Sandy, a fifth grade teacher at NES, believes a key benefit of SWPBIS is that “it rewards kids who are just those common little kids who follow directions every day. They receive something for that behavior instead of that just being the assumed behavior.”

In the MVSS, incentives are not only for students but are applied to the faculty as well. At NES, there is pin board in the office that is designated for recognizing and acknowledging teachers and school staff for their positive behaviors and contributions to a healthy school climate. Sandy explained you can recognize others for a job well done or that exceeded expectations. She said, “You can write something nice that someone else has done, a thank you for taking my parent pick-up duty, or you did an excellent job planning that field trip.” The teacher who writes on the board will get school money and the person it is about gets school money. Sandy believes that this kind of recognition “encourages good behavior and its being

respectful of our school and being responsible for your position.” Hillary, administrator at PES, believes that SWPBIS provides “opportunities for staff recognition that really promotes positive interactions here at the school.”

Alexander said his school is always trying hard to “come up with more incentives for faculty and staff so we can gain buy-in and improve the school climate.” Sharon, kindergarten teacher at NES, believes the incentives or rewards for teachers has made everyone “a little more cognizant of appreciating what each other does.” She extended her statements by claiming that “PBIS reminds us to appreciate those co-workers that are doing a little extra.” Members of the NES focus group identified acknowledgement by the administrators as a key factor in changing behavior. Micah, a fourth grade teacher at NES, said that “almost every morning an administrator brags on the kids, a specific class, and staff.” He elaborated even farther by saying, “Not only do all the teachers and the entire faculty in the building see that, all the kids see that too.” This is important because teachers “celebrate with each other” and students are “proud of their teacher...” This recognition and appreciation of teachers’ behaviors has influenced their actions by increasing their motivation to take positive steps that create and sustain a healthy school climate.

Focus on the positives.

The consensus in the interviews and focus group sessions is that in education it is often easier to focus on negative behaviors and to overlook positive behaviors. Alexander expressed his belief that “it can be very easy to point out the negative and to punish instead of focusing on positive behaviors.” Sarah, third grade teacher, remembered that before SWPBIS “you were recognizing the students that were not showing positive behavior and that was discouraging.” However, Elizabeth communicated that because of SWPBIS “we can focus more on the positives

than the negatives and I see myself trying more to praise and reward my class.” Diana, second grade teacher, expressed her feelings that SWPBIS “creates more of a positive spin on things and it has helped us focus on the positives.”

Hillary feels that SWPBIS has made teaching and interacting positively with students and other staff members easier. Hillary explained that “it’s easier to praise the kids than it is to reprimand them and I think they respond better to that.” In her experience, Martha feels that by “constantly focusing on positive stuff it has helped students get along better with their classmates and teachers.” She thinks one of the main reasons that focusing on the positives is so effective is that “a lot of the kids don’t get attention at home and crave that positive affirmation. They want to please their teacher.” June revealed that “we focus on more of the positive as opposed to ‘stop doing that’.” June said that it is now easier to say “Oh, I love how you are sitting on the floor or I love how you lined up.” For her this has encouraged her students to be “bucket fillers” and really try to help in the classroom and to be nicer to other students. Melissa said she has noticed that “kids will stand in line and look at you wanting that reward.” She thinks they “want that attention and want to please you.”

According to Sharon, focusing on the positives provides opportunities for teachers “to catch struggling students up on hard days.” She explained that when you focus on positives and catch them doing “crisscross apple sauce, being a helper, or just doing the right thing it lifts them up and they feel like they can still have a good day.” Timothy, physical education teacher, believes that “there’s always a redeeming quality in PBIS. You can make a mistake and you can also learn from that mistake.” Carol, first grade teacher, feels that SWPBIS has reduced the amount of negativity, which has influenced behaviors. She believes that “there’s not as much

negativity and the kids seem happier. You're not on them all the time for being bad and they do much better."

Motivation.

During the interviews and focus group sessions, participants reported that SWPBIS helped improve motivation for students to behave appropriately. Sandy indicated that "rewards give students motivation to behave and influences them to be kinder to their friends and their peers." During the NES focus group session, Connie, an academic coach, expressed that "You want your kids to have intrinsic value and not always watching for extra rewards but the rewards teach kids the importance of intrinsic value and what it truly is."

Incentives and focusing on the positives were identified as factors in improving school climate and increasing motivation. Brittney, counselor at NES, communicated,

Students don't necessary look forward to their home life but we need them to look forward to coming to school. PBIS helps them feel safe. They know they have people who care about them and they get rewarded for doing the right thing. This motivates students to come to school, work hard, and do the right thing.

According to Jodi, kindergarten teacher, "School money is just as good as real money to the students. So it just encourages and motivates them be nice." Saige reinforced that idea and said "that by kids knowing there will be some sort of reward or something extra for them it helps with classroom behavior."

SWPBIS incentives and rewards were acknowledged as being a motivational factor for school staff in promoting a positive school climate. According to Alexander, when the school started providing incentives to the staff it assisted in "gaining buy-in to help PBIS work and I think it has really worked on the school climate with the adults." Teachers expressed similar

ideas about the impact of incentives in influencing staff behaviors. Elizabeth believes that incentives are a “good motivator because they recognize teachers for doing the right thing and rewards them for it.” Sandy echoed Elizabeth’s thoughts and recognized that it does not take a lot of money or resources to reward and motivate teachers. Sandy believes that the little incentives are “just a super quick way to say thanks and teachers want that affirmation.”

Consistency Builds Community.

This was the second theme identified in the present collective study. By creating a shared culture of community where individuals engage in common verbal and overt behaviors, there should be consistent social and environmental stimuli (Fallon et al., 2012). Throughout the SWPBIS implementation and sustainability process, stakeholders within each school attributed a growing sense of community to clear expectations and consistent implementation of SWPBIS features. This theme emerged throughout the data analysis process and three distinct sub-themes were identified within the main theme, these being clear expectations, consistency, and community.

Clear expectations.

When participants were asked about what they liked most about SWPBIS and what has changed the school climate, clear expectations was one of the top responses. April explained that “all of us are working to keep things uniform across the school and teaching our clear expectations. Those clear, concise expectations help the teachers and students know what is expected and it keeps things easier to understand.” School-wide expectations are taught to all students and every stakeholder within the school understands what types of behaviors are desired and appropriate. Robyn believes that “going over the shared expectations helps everyone

understand how they should act.” She feels that because of the clear expectations, “everyone is more on the same page and kids from kindergarten through fifth grade know how to act.”

The SWPBIS team and grade level teams have made it a priority to create clear expectations for every area in the school and across all content areas. Laura, a counselor, expressed that “we meet and discuss expectations so everyone can clearly understand them and have the exact same goal.” Anita, music teacher, imparted that “expectations are school-wide and now everyone is on the same page. Music, art, and P.E. are not left out and the kids know what is expected from them when they come to our class.” Sharon discussed that they work hard “not to make it where kids couldn’t meet their goals because if it was impossible to meet the goal they wouldn’t even try.” She extended this thought by sharing that she feels the “kids can realistically do what is expected.”

Elizabeth reiterated the importance of spending time to teach clear, consistent expectations school-wide to influence behavior in a positive way. She explained,

You have to have boundaries, and I think it is really clear within our school. We’ve got the hallway rules, playground rules, lunchroom rules, and so on. At the beginning of the year, we do a two-week segment to cover the rules in the cafeteria, computer lab, in the gym, and anything they may do throughout the day. The kids really know the rules and can always tell you what is expected.

According to Robyn, this is imperative because “it’s not just my expectation or someone in the other grades. The consistency improves school climate.”

Teaching and visibility were two important factors identified in the effectiveness of expectations on improving school climate. Martha stated that “expectations contribute to a positive school climate as a result of teaching the expectations and having them posted all around

the school.” She explained that “teachers go over the expectations all the time. They’re hanging up in the hallway, cafeteria, outside restrooms, they are everywhere.” Sharon also explained that “you have to set clear and attainable expectations for kids to follow. It is harder in the beginning to teach the expectations but once they get it then it makes a big difference. The kids can realistically do what is expected.” According to Micah, teaching and visibility have influenced transitions because the “kids know what the expectations are and what they can earn for every class and even when they change grades.”

Consistency.

Consistent teaching and enforcement of expectations throughout the school were identified as key factors influencing behaviors and improving school climate. The NES focus group reflected on the importance of being consistent in expectations and incentives. Brittney stated that “it takes everybody in the school to implement and enforce expectations. You can’t just have one doing it and one not doing it.” Timothy expounded that consistency is vital because “no matter where they are in the school, whether changing classes or making transitions, everyone is using the same expectations.” Elizabeth explained that “every child in the school knows what our school money is and what they have to do to earn it. And so, you could go to any classroom and you could use that. It can be used as leverage and it’s effective.” Alexander reinforced a similar sentiment that SWPBIS is “only going to work if we do everything and if we do it together.”

Elizabeth reflected on her experience when she moved to teach a different grade level, “When I transferred grade levels it was still the same expectations and it’s just that the kids know what to expect from year to year. I think that consistency is good.” Kay, a fifth grade teacher, discussed her experience with SWPBIS and how it has improved consistency across grade levels,

PBIS had added consistency among the different grade levels because everyone is getting the same reward. Even though we may give it out differently, when we give the rewards like the movie and popcorn, we know that every grade level, all teachers, have done the same thing to have their students rewarded. It has brought more consistency and that has improved school climate.

The consistency of SWPBIS, according to Marley, has created an environment where the “kids know the expectations and consequences.” She feels this has really influenced the students as they transition through the different grade levels. Marley explained,

It makes it easier as the kids get older. The expectations are embedded in them. They learn it when they are in kindergarten and it again every year after. We have the same expectations and consequences so if the kid does something they shouldn’t do in one classroom the consequences are the same.

June contributed that she feels that SWPBIS “has made things easier on the kids. They learn it in kindergarten and they know the expectations. They’re posted. We talk about them. It just follows them all the way through.” Because of consistent expectations, Laura feels that “everyone has the exact same goals” and encourages teachers to “work together.” She continued by stating that being on the same page has “been beneficial and improved our school climate.”

SWPBIS consistency was also identified as having a positive influence on behavior, classroom management, and school climate. Alexander noted that teachers that are “really involved and are consistent in following PBIS have less discipline referrals.” Ashley is convinced that after analyzing data with the SWPBIS team that consistency “allows supports and interventions to be more effective and that helps with the overall discipline in the school.” She added that “it is a front end investment that is a lot of work, but once you get it going it helps out

a lot.” SWPBIS consistency was found to be effective in improving school climate by identifying students that may have been overlooked. According to Heather, “consistent tracking helps identify kids that need a little extra help.” Once those students are identified, then individual interventions can be implemented to decrease negative behaviors and increase positive behaviors.

The data revealed that consistency has positively influenced school climate, however, it also revealed that there is a struggle to maintain consistency. One of the main struggles has been consistently rewarding students and enforcing all of the expectations. Brittney shared that “we’ve got inconsistency between teachers and grade levels.” She feels this is evident by certain “grade levels give school money more often than other grade levels.” Martha echoed this observation stating, “There are still people who give out tons of school money and some who don’t give out hardly any.” She continued to express her observations but noted that “consistency has improved since we first started and it’s just getting everyone on the same page.”

Being consistent is a struggle school-wide but it is also a struggle within the district. Although the MVSS had been trained by the GaDOE and supported by Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) each school operates a little differently. Connie believes that there needs to be more consistency within the districts especially at the elementary school level. Connie noted,

When I go visit another elementary school or go to a district meeting it is obvious we don’t follow PBIS the same way. I wish we were more consistent because there are three elementary schools within the district and just one middle school and high school. I just wish we could be more consistent in that aspect.

Diana continued Connie's thoughts, "In a small community all of the elementary schools are being compared to each other. We need to be consistent within the district."

Community.

This study found that a sense of community was created as teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders consistently engaged in their school's SWPBIS framework. When asked what she liked most about her school's SWPBIS, Sharon communicated,

I do like the comradery that it brings in. I like how the kids cheer on each other to get school money and it helps with our community. It pulls everyone together within our school. Being consistent and having almost everyone participate builds that sense of community. We work hard to set it up to where the kids are successful and it builds on that community.

Sandy believes that being consistent in expectations and incentives has helped made them "unified and we work hard for that." June believes that because they have been working on SWPBIS for an extensively long period that it has fostered a "school climate that has been pretty consistent as far as people's perspective on behavior." Marley expressed that "being consistent in their SWPBIS has everybody on the same page and it gives us all unity."

Connie feels that the "constant rewards, like school money or just recognition, have given teachers a better way to provide immediate feedback which is an effective tool" to influence behavior. April revealed that the immediate feedback given through school money increases motivation and "students start responding, changing their behavior to get that money." Being consistent school-wide has provided opportunities for students from different grade levels and classes to interact with each other. Elizabeth thinks that "it gives kids an opportunity on reward

days to get mixed up with other kids they normally don't get to see. It's been good that they don't just see the same 20 faces every day."

Consistency in expectations and involvement from stakeholders has been recognized as key components in building a positive school climate. Creating a positive learning environment is an important task that Elizabeth thinks SWPBIS helps create because "kids and teachers look forward to coming to school." June communicated that being consistent has "made for a more positive climate because teachers are not so much on edge." Marley noted that her school has improved school climate because "everybody works together and we're all happy." She explained,

We put on good things for the kids so that they're happy and they know we care. We do bucket fillers with the kids so that they can do that for other teachers and other adults in the school too. We go out of our way to do stuff and the kids have seen that. So I think we just try to encourage each other.

Saige believes that because of a consistent SWPBIS that her school has "grown more together and we've just been more supportive of each other."

One factor identified in fostering consistency of a SWPBIS framework that has improved school climate is communication. Christine imparted that her school's SWPBIS team meet "monthly and have honest talks about what we can change, who can we make things better, and what's working and what's not working." Robyn believes that SWPBIS has increased communication because "teachers want to know what others are doing and how often they're giving out rewards." She continued to explain that improved communication has helped bring her team "all together." April revealed that teachers across grade levels are being more "collaborative and making sure they are doing sort of the same thing and working on the same

expectations.” Alexander shared that during his time in his position that he has seen “communication between grade levels increase” and that has helped teachers and students “which provides a positive climate.”

Data analysis revealed that communicating clear expectations consistently across the school setting has positively improved school climate. Micah admitted that the “teachers are strict and mean what they say.” But he continued and clarified that students know “what the expectations are but we are a very loving climate. We tell them we love them every single day.” Hillary believes that because of the significant number of classrooms strictly implementing SWPBIS that there has been a “drastic reduction” in office referrals by “25 to 30%.” She elaborated that teachers are communicating more and this has fostered a “definite recognition that things could be different if we didn’t have PBIS and I think that contributes to our school climate.”

During her interview, Sarah revealed that she believes that the school climate has improved. She explained,

Teachers feel better knowing that there is a system that rewards positive behavior. I think it just makes us feel better rewarding those kids that are doing what they should be doing. We can be more positive and not focus on what you’re doing wrong. I think this has brought us closer together as a staff and school.

Beth contributed that she feels her school has become more united because “PBIS supports positive interactions with students” and by working closely together a “unique community” has been established.

Being consistent and creating a positive learning environment requires intentional collaboration and takes time to develop. In a focus group session, Diana expressed,

PBIS is kind of a front-end investment. It's a lot of work in the beginning, I understand that, but I think once the year gets going in the middle and end of the year I think it helps a lot. There is not as much negativity and there is more positivity. The kids, teachers, and administrators seem happier. Now that makes for a positive school climate.

Connie continued with Diana's statements and added "Upfront planning and teaching is key. It helps us be more consistent and loving. It helps us to intentionally think about not getting on to someone everyday which makes them feel better." Connie declared that because of SWPBIS she believes that "the overall the climate has been more positive." Martha thinks being more intentional has caused everyone to "look for the good stuff, when someone goes above and beyond, and recognize that behavior." She feels this has helped to create a "more positive atmosphere overall."

Participants reported that the improved school climate and sense of community has had a positive impact on behaviors. Sarah said that "looking at the data has allowed us to focus our main problem areas. There are more people looking at data and working to solve the problem than just our assistant principal." She continued to say that SWPBIS has "affected school-wide behavior in a good way." April indicated that focusing on character building has "improved behavior." She emphasized that in their community "character means a lot and parents seem to get behind on us on that as well." Saige believes that having parent support and unity has "made a big difference in the classroom. The kids know the expectations and we've all grown closer together so we don't have as much discipline issues." Martha believes that over time as school climate has improved it has had an impact on behavior problems,

Four years ago, we were at 87% of our kids having one or less office referrals. Then the next year it was 89% and the year after that was 92%. Last year we had 92% and that is

really high but looking at data this year we are consistently 92% now. So that shows our behavioral issues are decreasing.

Marley believes that every year “PBIS gets easier” and at her school, “we come together more.”

Mindset Impacts Relationships.

This was the third theme that emerged during the data analysis process. Coffey and Horner (2012) found that teacher buy-in was instrumental in the implementation and sustainability of an effective SWPBIS framework. His research found various factors that increased buy-in via changed mindsets and reasons that caused resistance from various stakeholders. Participants in the collective case study discussed their experiences with implementing and sustaining SWPBIS and the impact it has made on relationships within the school. Two distinct sub-themes were identified within the main theme, which were buy-in and resistance, and relational bonds.

Buy-in and resistance.

Participants in the study discussed teacher buy-in and how this has changed over time. In the NES focus group session, Micah indicated that teacher buy-in was “critical in getting started and to keep it going from year to year.” Diana added that some teachers “have that old-school mindset and just don’t want to buy in to all the positives and extra rewards.” During her interview, Hillary indicated that “over the years, teacher buy-in has really contributed to our positive school climate.” She feels that the positive results from SWPBIS has caused “more teachers to believe in it and has helped it continue.”

During her interview, Martha reflected that in the very beginning of her school’s PBIS “we struggled to get everyone to buy-in but right now I feel like we have almost 90% buy-in.” She explained that “it took 3–5 years to implement and to get it working effectively. But, we

worked continuously and I feel like it's just gotten easier and easier. I guess it takes more experience with it to get people on board and now it is working well.." During her interview, Saige indicated,

I think we've really grown. I mean I was back at the very beginning when we started PBIS. We went through all the training and visiting other schools. Over the years, we've seen things that worked well and we've changed things that have not worked. I think we work together more now instead of just one or two people making decisions, we're all involved now and that's great.

Alexander indicated that "if the teachers value it, their students will value it." He continued by expressing his belief that "some teachers have had to change their mindset, philosophy, and that has been hard. But, more and more are now seeing why we have PBIS."

Robyn has experienced the shift in mindset that many teachers at her school have made throughout the last few years. She reflected that,

At first, that's been several years ago, when we first implemented it people were negative and reluctant to even try PBIS. I haven't really heard anyone say anything negative lately, especially this year. Everybody is on board. They know that it's our school's reward system. It's the county's reward system. It's what we're following now. It's what we are doing.

Alexander believes that "a majority of our teachers are supportive of SWPBIS and think that it has got some really great components to it and can help our school." During her interview, Sarah declared that she thinks "some teachers buy into it more than others. We've had teachers who've had issues before and felt like it wasn't working but now that number is shrinking. I think that we all try."

Martha who has been at her school since the original implementation of SWPBIS, indicated that “in the beginning it was a hard thing to get staff to buy into it.” However, “since we’ve implemented it more teachers are more comfortable with it and really like it. It’s not as big of a problem.” She continued by saying that “at this point in time the majority of teachers are positive about PBIS.” Later in her interview, Martha discussed the changes in the perspectives of adults within the school and the impact that change has had on school climate. She explained,

The adults in the school have bought into it more and they’re more agreeable to do things. So obviously, they feel better about PBIS and honestly, it looks better in the school too. In the past, they did it but they did it not really willingly. So that’s a positive thing and I feel like we just have a more positive school atmosphere overall.

Saige also sees that more teachers believe in SWPBIS. Saige shared that “I think for the most part it’s been a very positive experience for everybody. I think it really helps us to support each other.” She added that because of the support teachers receive from SWPBIS that more teachers are “very supportive” and “willing to be more involved in the decision making process.” During the WES focus group, Kathy imparted that “in the beginning not many or maybe half of the staff was on board but now I think everybody is around 80% on board.”

The data analysis process has shown that staff buy-in has increased and the participants discussed some key factors that help explain the increase of support for SWPBIS. During the PES focus group session, Peter indicated that he believes “more teachers see PBIS as being positive and have bought into it because they see how it is beneficial.” June shared that more teachers are doing SWPBIS because they see it as a “good solid program to monitor behavior.” Marley indicated that “almost everyone is behind PBIS because it helps build positive relationships and helps keep behavior down.” Later in her interview, Marley elaborated,

Eventually other people buy into it and they just see that it works, and so if there was anybody hesitant at this point they've seen that other people have bought into it. They see it's working for them so they need to try it. I feel like that probably has a lot to do with why so many support PBIS. They also see how it works and how it really doesn't make things so complicated to the point where you're spending hours of your time working on it. I think just making sure everybody knew the procedure and it was as simple as possible. We have more people working together to make it happen.

Participants expressed that seeing the results of SWPBIS influenced their perspective of SWPBIS. Witnessing SWPBIS in operation and the results it has produced within the school has increased the support of school stakeholders over time.

Support from the school's administration was identified as another reason that the staff's mindset has changed and more stakeholders support SWPBIS. During her interview, Saige stated that her administrators are "very supportive. They're very involved in the decision making. Whatever we need or want or ideas we have, they're really good about listening and giving us their ear." Marley believes her administration is "very supportive and they work hard to find ways to be positive with the teachers and students." June echoed the same thoughts when she said her administration is "very supportive of PBIS and they try to give teachers what they need." During the WES focus group session, Shauna communicated that because the administrators are "very supportive" it has "helped teachers understand how important PBIS is." Beth added to Shauna's comments by stating that administrative support "motivates the staff and excites the kids."

Even though participants expressed that a growing number of staff members are buying into SWPBIS, they acknowledged that there are those who are still resistant. Alexander

acknowledged that not all staff were supportive of SWPBIS and said he “wished that we had more teacher buy-in into all the aspects of PBIS.” When discussing how his school could improve their SWPBIS he stated that “I would love to have more teacher support on every aspect of PBIS because some of them will support part of it but disagree with some parts of it and that makes it difficult.” Sharon also echoed that sentiment by indicating that some of her colleagues “aren’t so positive of PBIS” and “have been very resistant to do anything in PBIS.”

During her interview, Elizabeth indicated that “some teachers simply don’t want to do PBIS and have no desire to follow what PBIS is asking us to do.” She elaborated and identified that in her experience, older teachers are typically the ones who are most resistant to SWPBIS. She believes this is because “they have taught for 20 years and they want to be able to do what they know has already worked in the past.” During the WES focus group session, Heather expressed her belief that “some people have different beliefs about PBIS and some are just reluctant to change.” She continued and said that “most of the teachers who are reluctant are old fashioned.” Elizabeth believes part of the reason they are so reluctant is that they think “you behave or you get a spanking” and that “kids don’t need a reward for doing what is expected.” Lynn expanded on Elizabeth’s response and said she thinks that “older teachers have a misconception that being positive with a student and rewarding is all that PBIS is and they believe there are no real consequences.”

When discussing how other teachers feel about PBIS, April declared,

I think mostly the biggest qualm I hear from teachers, mainly older ones, is that we’re rewarding people for doing things they should already be doing. And it’s fine to reward those that are always behaving than to reward the ones who really don’t and not really trying to earn it.

Martha described the biggest concern she hears at her school is about “a child that’s been getting in a lot of trouble and then they’re given an opportunity to do something special..” Martha continued,

They’ll bring up why are you letting that one do something special when they have all these discipline problems and issues. Why are you letting them participate and trying to motivate them when you have all these others over here that never give you any trouble. They don’t see it as being fair and have fought the changes that PBIS has made to our discipline policy.

Saige agrees that most of the resistance to SWPBIS is rewarding students for behaviors that are expected throughout the school, indicating,

We’ve had a lot of conversations about rewards. Some still argue that you’re not always rewarded for positive behavior as adults. We’re not always rewarded for that. So maybe we’re teaching them that there’s a reward for just doing what you’re supposed to do. The teachers who believe that are the ones who don’t give out rewards and push back on anything that rewards expected behaviors.

Besides differing philosophies on rewards and real world consequences, time was another factor that was identified as a cause of resistance towards SWPBIS. Martha explained,

Time is a big factor in how teachers feel about PBIS. Some teachers feel like that’s just one more thing that I have to do. They say they don’t have time to keep up with the number of points or school money. It’s hard for them because they have to keep up with how many points kids have or how much money they have.

In her interview, June also agreed that time is a major reason why some teachers are resistant to SWPBIS. She said that “it’s hard for teachers to have the time to hand out and keep up with

school money.” She feels that it is even more of a hardship on “older teachers who don’t know technology and how to use it.” Carol who has taught for 27 years feels that “with all the lesson planning, documenting, and everything we have to teach it is challenging to keep up with PBIS.”

Relational bonds.

This sub-theme explores the impact that SWPBIS has had on relationships within the school environment. The relationships explored during this collective case study were between students, between students and teachers, and between teachers. During the interviews and focus group sessions with the participants, it became clear that relationships that are more positive were fostered because of the influence of SWPBIS.

During her interview, April indicated that she has witnessed a shift in attitude among her students that has positively influenced school climate. She indicated that her team and the whole school “are really trying to build good character.” She elaborated by saying,

Good character is reiterated throughout the school in different places. It’s in the classroom. It’s on the news. It’s on the newsletters. Because our kids are being taught good character their manners have changed over the years. Now if a student drops something or something falls off their desk, it’s funny to watch how many will flock to help. They also hold doors for each other. It is becoming more natural for them.

Sarah indicated that “kids are realizing their actions are important and they’re getting recognized more and not getting left out.” She believes that this has changed students’ attitudes in part owing to the fact that “students are feeling more validated and happier since they’re being rewarded and recognized for showing that positive behavior.” Alexander declared that he sees more “student helpers who encourage each other.” He expounded,

More of our students now take the leadership role seriously because of PBIS and they tell their friends and other people in their class to do the right thing. They try to keep them out of trouble. We also have a high special needs population in our school. More students try to encourage them and help them than we've had in the past.

Some participants reported that SWPBIS has built good character in their students and that it teaches them morals. Learning good character traits and striving to reach the clear expectations have influenced student behavior, thereby affecting their relationships with others. Sandy feels that SWPBIS teaches "good morals that we're supposed to have." She believes that "SWPBIS reminds kids to be more respectful to one another and it does tend to encourage them to be more accountable for their actions with their friends." Hillary said she has seen a difference in student behavior in that "they can now identify the three expectations that we have and they try to push each other and prompt each other to follow them."

During the PES focus group session, Peter said that teaching good character has "helped the students work together as a team." Kay added that she had one student "asked me if he could give his school money to someone else so they could do the activity for that month." During her interview, Martha revealed that more students are participating in their peaceful peer program that allows fourth and fifth graders to be a mentor to the younger students. She said that now "we have students that have developed the skills where they can kind of step in and be a good role model for those that are having trouble."

The participants discussed various ways that SWPBIS has affected the relationships between students. The shift in attitude that was identified has had ramifications that have improved the quality of relationships students have with one another. Laura communicated that she "doesn't get a lot of reports from kids that other kids are not being nice to them." She said

she sees students “trying to help each other and do nice things for each other..” During her interview Marley shared,

Our kids really encourage each other. PBIS encourages the kids to always be watching out for ways that they can be kind to each other. You walk down the hall and you see one of our kids drop something, they’ll be a group of kids helping them pick it back up. So I think it really just has encouraged them to step up and be better people.

During the WES focus group session, Andrea indicated,

Students are following our school expectations and they’re being respectful of one another, which automatically improves relations if they’re being respectful. Well, I hear a lot of kids say like ‘you’re dipping into my bucket’ or ‘I filled a bucket today’. I’ve heard them say more positive comments like ‘yeah, awesome’. So they’re really good about positive works and helping each other out.

Hillary said during her interview that “students are treating each other kindly and that has gone a long way.”

Participants reported that the evidence of improved relationships between students can be seen in discipline reports to the office. Martha noted that,

I don’t get many reports of kids saying so and so bullies me. Really it’s like a one-time incident that they call them a name, which is not okay, and there are still consequences for that. But for several years in a row we didn’t have a single fight or anything like that and I feel like our kids because we’re constantly focusing on the positives I feel like they get along better.

In the classroom, participants reported that they see improvements in the relationships between students. June imparted,

We've had PBIS for quite a while, but I think the kids know what's expected and they know if they do this to another child there are consequences. So I think they treat each other more respectfully as opposed to not because they know that they're going to lose a circle or they're going to lose school money for what they're doing wrong.

Saige reported,

PBIS has got students good about reminding each other and to work together. Just by the time we get them in 5th grade, we have just three real expectations as far as classroom. They're real good about reminding each other and letting each other know this is what we're supposed to be doing or if you don't have a pencil or supply you need then get it before we get started. It is just things like that. They are just really supportive of each other.

Brittney believes that "Talking about being respectful, being responsible to learn has helped students know how to treat others." She expanded on her thought and revealed that "students are able to see what being a respectful student looks like and they exemplify it."

Participants reported that not only have relationships among students improved but SWPBIS has positively influenced the relationship between students and teachers. Participants reported that they have seen a noticeable change in how students and teachers approach their relationships. Martha emphasized that SWPBIS gives teachers an "opportunity to focus on the positives.." She revealed that she feels that the students are realizing that teachers are "noticing good behavior and that they're liked and cared for." June explained,

Students are given the expectations up-front the first day of school and then they are followed through. So they know how to treat us, what we expect, and how our classroom

and school are managed. The students are more respectful and the teachers don't feel like they have to fuss all the time. It's a happier relationship all the way around.

Saige echoed the same sentiment during her interview. She pointed out that "students and teachers have the same expectations so we are all the same", which is important because "students won't think a teacher is just picking on them or has unfair rules."

SWPBIS was also reported to be a useful tool in helping teachers make sure students are not overlooked. During the WES focus group, Beth explained that "SWPBIS helps teachers make sure that those great little kids that are always in their desk and always being quiet are not overlooked." Anita indicated that she thinks SWPBIS has allowed her to "step in and develop relationships" that normally she would not be able to foster. During her interview, Elizabeth indicated that by "Acknowledging positive behaviors, even the ones that are just expected, changes the way the kids feel about their teachers." She elaborated by saying "When kids are more respectful, teachers are more positive, then it makes the classroom climate more warm."

Participants claimed that one reason the student-teacher relationship has improved is that students are trying to live up to the expectations and please their teachers. During her interview, Robyn indicated,

I see better behavior. The kids want to please you. They want to do something with our class rules. They want to follow those rules. My kids want to say 'hey I was listening, I was walking in line, I was being a helper.' That's why with my class you're going to see quiet signs out in the hallway because they know that I'm always watching and I am going to notice that.

Participants also reported that students are more willing to accept responsibility and take an active role in the classroom. This has eliminated some of the extra strain of handling negative

behaviors that has influenced the student-teacher relationship. Marley said in her third grade class that her “kids are really willing to take on responsibilities in the classroom and do a little bit extra.” She claims that SWPBIS has “taught them responsibility, kindness, things like that which make for a better relationship..” Melissa echoed the same sentiment and said “I think they want to please and I think they want that attention.” The positive attention that students seek has changed their behavior, which has altered how teachers interact with their students.

Another factor influencing student-teacher behavior is a shifting mindset of teachers toward classroom management and interactions with their students. During the NES focus group session, Connie indicated,

Ultimately, teachers must change their perception of students and their demeanor with students. When that happens, we’ve seen demeanors change and attitudes towards students change then their behavior changes. That’s something that we’re able to work out and I think that does help the relationship between students and teachers. Teachers can cross that barrier and have a relationship that is positive with students.

Martha thinks improved relationships between students and teachers is more than just having a positive attitude or focusing on positive behaviors. Martha explained,

If you sit down with a kid that’s struggling behaviorally and say what can we do to help you and try to intervene on his part it really makes the biggest difference. I think that helps them see that somebody actually cares and we don’t just want to punish them all the time. It helps them see that somebody is willing to help.

Martha continued and indicated that “now both people are invested and that has made a big difference.”

Participants reported that SWPBIS has positively influenced the relationships among teachers, which has created a healthier school climate. Christine said that SWPBIS “really makes you look at what others do and just recognize what other people do.” June shared that more “teachers do little things for each other and it’s just really nice to be recognized.” Saige believes that SWPBIS has influenced relationships among teachers because “We’re all working toward that end. We have the same goals and expectations we’re trying to meet.”

Working toward the same goal was identified as a key factor in developing and improving relationships among teachers. During her interview, Martha explained,

Well, teachers have to work together to enforce expectations and come up with rewards. And that way they can have their two cents in with each other and they decide together what would best fit the student body that they have.

Martha feels that this allows teacher to understand their students and encourages collaboration to create a positive school climate,

Teachers have to problem-solve with each other for sure. If there’s a kid that struggles, then ultimately the team will have to get together and decide what can we do to help this kid. And it helps them problem solve and work together and be consistent. Teachers now are talking and sharing with each other. They have more respect and understanding of each other than they had before.

Marley identified the school staff as a “huge family..” She explained that even though “we have our moments when you get really stressed out but, overall everybody loves everybody. We try to give each other a break and we can rely on each other.” She believes that SWPBIS has helped the staff grow “closer together and become more like a family because everything we do is unified.” Bryan believes that SWPBIS has brought the different grades and classes together

under one unified system. He explained that “We’re all kind of interlaced within doing PBIS. We have more comradery among us because we are on the same page and we can work together.” Timothy imparted that having a SWPBIS framework has made him feel more part of the school. He indicated that “In the past I felt that I wasn’t really included in the school because I taught PE. But now I’m on the PBIS team and have I have a little more say in what happens around here.”

Although participants reported an overall improvement in the relationships among teachers, some participants have experienced SWPBIS causing some stress among the staff. Alexander communicated that he thinks “in some ways PBIS can cause a little friction between differing opinions about how things should be within PBIS and making decisions.” Sarah feels that SWPBIS has caused a rift among teachers over the use of rewards. Sarah and Sharon feel there is tension between teachers who diligently pass out rewards and those teachers who believe you should not be rewarded for what you are supposed to do. Brittney has also experienced tension between lower and upper grades in deciding school-wide rewards. Elizabeth has witnessed conflict among teachers in the SWPBIS decision making process. However, she indicated that “ultimately that’s why we have a PBIS team so that every grade level is represented and we can come up with what’s best for our school as a whole.”

Support and Challenges Shape Program Perceptions.

This was the fourth theme that emerged during the data analysis process. Participants reported that support from administrators was an integral part of the effectiveness of SWPBIS and how they perceived the framework. However, participants reported that the lack of resources and differing classroom management philosophies were challenges that influenced the implementation and sustainability of SWPBIS. Four distinct sub-themes were identified within

the main theme, which were administration support, resources, classroom management philosophies, and improvements.

Administration support.

When discussing the administrations' perceptions of SWPBIS, participants believed that the administrators in their school were supportive of the framework and worked diligently to ensure successful implementation and sustainability. Sharon who has been at the same school for the last seventeen years described the administrators as "very supportive" and said they are "constantly talking to the kids about doing the right thing." Elizabeth said that her school has an "extremely supportive administration." One reason she believes the administration is so supportive is because "they see the positive in the program and how it could work for our school.." Jodi expressed that she thinks her administrators see SWPBIS as something "positive" because they "see how beneficial it is.."

Participants discussed that administration involvement in SWPBIS has had a positive impact on school climate and garnered more buy-in from school staff and students. Sandy indicated that her "administrators do a very good job of pushing the kids to attain those goals and to go those activities." She discussed one occasion when an administrator participated in a reward activity, "He got down there on the water slides with the kids last year and got in the water from the fire truck." She imparted that his participation "made it fun for everyone. He made it like it's actually something everyone would enjoy and they're proud to be a part of."

Participants identified various actions taken by administrators that illustrate their support for SWPBIS and provide insight into their perceptions of SWPBIS. Connie communicated,

Every morning on the morning news, the administrators try to find something positive and share it with the entire student body. They talk about behavior and expectations. The

more they talk about it, every day, the more we all see how important it is and how things are getting better. When it comes from the top you and the kids really know how important it is.

Robyn revealed that her administrators are active in helping out with “fundraisers and things like that so that the school can have rewards for the children.” She pointed out that they are “supportive and positive”, which shows that they “believe in what we are doing.” April indicated that her administrators are “always good about being supportive of the schedules, helping us with reward days, getting the community involved, and getting us money to buy supplies.”

During the NES focus group session, Micah said that the “administrators are willing to support the teachers in any change they need to make in the grade level to make PBIS work. They understand that if something’s not working then they give the teachers the autonomy to meet together and find something that will work.” Sarah shared,

I think our administrators take PBIS very seriously and they are constantly trying to find ways to improve it and to find better rewards for the kids. They are always trying to make it better and they’re very supportive of it and do everything they can to support us in implementing it.

When discussing how her administrators feel about PBIS, Marley expressed,

They are 100% for it. Our administrators do everything that they can to make sure that we’re good, to make sure the kids are good. So, anything that they need to do or they need to change or we have concerns about, they’re willing to hear us out and work something out.

Saige communicated that her “administrators are very supportive and very involved in the decision making.” She thinks this is essential because they are “listening to us and understand what is going on in the school.”

To help SWPBIS be effective, participants pointed to the fact that administrators had set specific times designated to teach school-wide expectations to the entire student body. Sarah indicated that the administrators realize that the school needs consistency and structure to ensure everyone understands the expectations and the importance of SWPBIS. To help accomplish this task, Sarah said the “administrators established a whole two-week segment at the beginning of the year for us to go over all the rules and things the students may do throughout the day.” June imparted that administrators are more visible and are in the classroom more than they used to be. She feels that they “like what we are doing and brag on us.”

Participants reported that administrators are analyzing data and pinpointing problem areas to address problems. Taking the time for data analysis, listening to teachers, and striving to eliminate problem areas illustrate administrators’ commitment to SWPBIS. Sarah said that “Administrators really use the data to see where trouble is happening, and really trying to remedy the problems and figure out why we’re having issues.” She believes this is a key factor in “why PBIS is successful at our school.” April shared that she thinks her administrators are “really looking at data to see where the biggest problem areas are and they work on being proactive.” June feels that inappropriate behaviors have declined because administrators are analyzing referrals and focusing on fixing the root of the problems. June believes that this illustrates how “supportive the administrators are of PBIS and how they focus on improving school climate.”

The administrators who participated in the collective case study reported that the majority of the teachers within their school support SWPBIS and think positively about it. Alexander

declared that he thinks “A majority of our teachers are supportive of PBIS and think that it has got some really great components to it and can help our school.” He admitted that there are some teachers who “simply have no desire to follow PBIS.” Hillary communicated that the data from the teacher surveys show that her school has “significant buy-in and the feedback has been generally positive.” She believes “Close to 100% of our teachers are participating in some way or another with the kids getting school money.” Martha communicated that “the majority of teachers are positive about it.” She clarified that “many teachers still have some concerns and they’ll bring them to me. But, overall they see it has being helpful.”

Resources.

During interviews and focus group sessions, participants identified a lack of resources as being a major challenge to having a successful SWPBIS framework. The participants have acknowledged that administrators work hard to help them have the necessary resources needed for SWPBIS. However, funding is a major obstacle in obtaining necessary or desired resources. During her interview, Hillary shared that her “immediate concern has to do with fundraising, making sure that we have adequate resources to supply the store and have it be meaningful items to the kids to able to purchase.” Hillary continued and said she would “like to see more fund raising efforts and some buy in to be able to have access to money and to buy things for the school store.”

Alexander also communicated concerns about the cost of having rewards that the students will get excited about. He said that at his school they try to have “big rewards every nine weeks, a school store, and incentives for students and adults.” However, these rewards and incentives typically occur at some cost that must be paid. During the PES focus group session, Katie

indicated that “you have to have money to run a successful PBIS.” Jodi added that “you have to have good fundraisers and use all the connections you have.”

Sarah indicated that “funding is always a big issue. I wish we could have more money to put into it where we could do even more for the kids.” Even though Sarah’s school typically does smaller rewards, “they cost money and it quickly adds up.” Sharon believes that if there is more of a selection in the school store or bigger school rewards it would motivate more students to follow expectations. The problem in offering a wider selection of rewards is that it costs more money and the school has to find a way to pay for it.

Classroom management philosophies.

During the interviews and focus group sessions with the participants, it became clear that a teacher’s philosophy regarding classroom management influenced their perception on SWPBIS. In situations where teachers have a classroom management philosophy that is contradictory to SWPBIS, struggles and challenges are created when implementing features of SWPBIS with fidelity. Alexander expressed his belief that upper grade teachers tend to resist SWPBIS more than kindergarten to second grade teachers do. Sharon shares this opinion and indicated that “older grades don’t always agree with younger grades” when it comes to SWPBIS. Micah explained that for “fourth and fifth grade we need to choose our own way to keep up with money or points because we do rotation with different subject areas.” Micah indicated that since upper grade students change classes and move among teachers within a team it is important for upper grade teachers to have a “system that works best for them instead of the clip charts.”

Some of the participants in the collective case study felt that SWPBIS was not a realistic framework of classroom management and did not adequately prepare students for real world situations. Sandy described it as,

Driving on the road, you follow the speed limit because it's the right thing to do and if you don't you get a ticket. No one comes and gives me money every time I follow the speed limit. So I feel like sometimes we're giving kids a false sense of why they should be doing these things. We shouldn't be doing these things just to get a reward. We should be doing these because that's making a better person. You're being a good citizen. So I feel like that sometimes PBIS is contradictory to the real world.

Saige feels that "We need to somehow let our kids understand that when they leave elementary school there are going to be some serious consequences for them." Marley shared her concerns that younger students do not truly understand rewards so it makes it more difficult to implement PBIS in a lower grade classroom properly. She explained that lower grade teachers are "constantly having to teach them all of PBIS" and that makes it difficult to "keep up with school money, rewards, and everything else." Marley believes this is one reason that some teachers do not use SWPBIS as it is intended and hold on to the classroom management methods that they have used in the past.

During her time as an administrator, Martha said she has had several conversations and discussions with teachers concerning establishing a false sense of entitlement among the students. Martha recalled a teacher saying,

I worry about kids expecting stuff and then entitlement sometimes comes out. And when they get up in middle and high school, they don't get all these little rewards that we're giving out. I worry that that's setting them up for some disappointment or some hard times in the future.

Martha revealed that she has some of the same concerns, “Some kids do start expecting stuff or getting extra interventions because they need it. But when that stops for them, that’s what worries me.” She continued by saying, “the problem is that the real world doesn’t do that.”

Improvements.

This collective case study found that even though the majority of administrators and teachers support SWPBIS they have suggestions on how to improve its effectiveness and sustainability. Their suggestions for improving SWPBIS reflect their perceptions on the impact and influence it has on creating a positive school climate. Sharon indicated that her school needs to continue to improve on “training the kids better at the beginning of the year.” She suggests that they continue to develop their SWPBIS lesson plans and determine ways to help students understand the expectations.

June stated that her school “is really good with the monthly rewards but we need to figure out how to do either a school-wide store or classroom store that is cost efficient.” She also indicated that she would like her school to find an easier way to track the school money and maintain the rewards. Robyn said one aspect of SWPBIS that she would like to see improved is the tracking of school money or points. She feels that it can be overwhelming to try to maintain money but incorporating a program such as Class Dojo may make that component of SWPBIS easier for teachers and it would encourage teachers to give out more rewards. Sandy suggested, “Let students take a survey and let the kids choose the activities they like at the beginning of the year that they would like to attend.” She feels this would help plan for rewards throughout the year and would be more motivational for the students.

Marley emphasized previously that the lack of consequences may not adequately prepare students for real life. Therefore, she thinks that to improve SWPBIS her school needs to make

“consequences more concrete so the kids are like ‘oh if I do this then this is going to happen’.”

Later, Marley expressed her belief that they need to “make it a little more kid friendly as far as consequences so that they understand why they’re getting a consequence for that they’ve done instead of just saying you got 10 minutes to stand.” Wanda communicated that she would like to see more equity in rewards. She said that “the kids who are well behaved won’t always earn as many as kids who are not as well behaved because you’re always trying to be positive.”

Alexander indicated that he would love to see more “teacher support on every aspect of PBIS because there are a lot of components to comply with.” He revealed that they have had “a hard time staying in line with PBIS because of knowing and remembering all the aspects to stick to.” Marley feels that her school needs to help “make sure everybody knows the procedures and to make it as simple as possible.”

Research Question Results

This section of Chapter Four serves to answer the research questions posed by the collective case study. The research questions were developed from the literature review regarding issues of school discipline, implementation and effectiveness of SWPBIS, school climate, and the perceptions of teachers and administrators. The central question sought to discover how administrators and teachers perceive the influence of SWPBIS on school climate. Each of the subquestions seeks to explore specific factors that are contained within the central question. Therefore, the answers to the subquestions combine to provide an in-depth answer to the central question.

The research questions that guided this collective case study were answered through one or more of the four themes that emerged. The themes and subthemes were identified from the data analysis process, which systematically narrowed the list of codes. The codes were identified

and organized and the emerging themes were revealed. Four distinct themes emerged, which were (a) incentives influence behaviors, (b) consistency builds community, (c) mindset impacts relationships, and (d) support and challenges shape program perceptions. This section in Chapter Four presents how the central question and each subquestion was answered through these four themes.

Central question: How do administrators and teachers perceive the influence of SWPBIS on school climate at the elementary school level? The central question explored the experiences of administrators and teachers to examine how they perceive the influence SWPBIS has had on school climate. This question was answered through all four of the themes that emerged from this collective case study. The administrators and teachers who participated had varying roles and differing levels of experience in implementing and sustaining SWPBIS. Several participants had extensive experiences with SWPBIS and were part of the original implementation process, while others are newer to the district or the teaching profession. However, the data revealed that administrators and teachers have similar perceptions of the influence SWPBIS has on school climate. Both administrators and teachers think that SWPBIS has had a positive influence on school climate. Teaching clear expectations and providing incentives has positively changed relationships within the school environment and fostered constructive relationships. The opportunities provided through SWPBIS allowed administrators and teachers to teach positive social skills and focus on positive aspects of behavior. This encouraged positive behavior from the students and school staff, which resulted in a healthier school climate.

Subquestion 1: What features of SWPBIS are perceived as having a positive influence on school climate at the elementary school level? Subquestion 1 examined the

features of SWPBIS that increase the frequency of positive behaviors that result in a more positive, healthy school climate. This subquestion was answered by two of the four themes that emerged from this study, which were theme one, incentives influences behavior; and theme two, consistency builds community. Rewards had a positive influence on behavior and motivated students and school staff, which increased the fluency of desired behaviors. The utilization of school money was an effective tool for encouraging students to meet expectations and support each other. Focusing on the positives instead of concentrating on the negatives improved school climate. The use of positive words of affirmation by administrators, teachers, and students helped build a sense of community throughout the school. Another feature of SWPBIS that positively influenced the school climate was recognition. Recognizing positive behavior led to an increase in desired behaviors and SWPBIS buy-in. Participants communicated that having consistent, clear, school-wide expectations improved school climate. Shared expectations encouraged school unity by ensuring stakeholders understood what behaviors were desired and appropriate.

Subquestion 2: What features of SWPBIS are perceived as having a negative influence on school climate at the elementary school level? Subquestion 2 examined the features of SWPBIS that increased negative behaviors thereby harming the school climate. This question was answered by two themes, which were theme one, incentives influence behavior; and theme two, consistency builds community. Participants reported that overall the features of SWPBIS had a positive influence on school climate. However, there were some concerns regarding the long-term consequences of rewards and the difficulty of tracking school money/points. These concerns were primarily shared by teachers, not administrators. Some teachers perceive the use of rewards as not preparing students for the real world and for creating a sense of entitlement. They also believed that rewards were not always distributed in an

equitable manner, which discouraged some students from trying to earn school money/points. Tracking school money/points was acknowledged as time consuming and tedious, which distracts from other features of SWPBIS and content material.

Subquestion 3: How has SWPBIS influenced relationships among students and adults in the elementary school? Subquestion 3 sought to gain an understanding of how SWPBIS has influenced relationships among students and adults in the elementary school. This question was answered by three themes, which were theme one, incentives influence behavior; theme two, consistency builds community; and theme three, mindset impacts relationships. SWPBIS has fostered positive and constructive relationships between students, between students and teachers, and among teachers. Features of SWPBIS have encouraged students and school staff to be supportive of one another and display good character traits. Students have embraced greater leadership roles within the school and teachers are more aware of the actions of others that exceed expectations. SWPBIS has allowed for greater positive interactions among stakeholders and strengthened relational bonds. There has been a change in mindset that has occurred over time where more stakeholders have bought-in to SWPBIS. As more stakeholders support and believe in SWPBIS, relationships have improved, which has been beneficial to the school climate.

Subquestion 4: What are the differences in perceptions between administrators and teachers of SWPBIS at the elementary school level? Subquestion 4 seeks to identify and understand how administrators and teachers perceive the effectiveness of SWPBIS at the elementary level. This question was answered by three of the four themes, which were theme one, incentives influence behavior; theme three, mindset impacts relationships; and theme four, support and challenges shape program perceptions. Administrators and teachers shared the belief

that SWPBIS is effective in influencing behavior, building a sense of community, and strengthening relationships. Both administrators and teachers identify SWPBIS as a key factor in creating and maintaining a positive school climate. When determining the effectiveness of SWPBIS, administrators often noted the decrease in office referrals and improved behavior in settings outside of the classroom. Teachers often identified the change in behaviors and relationships that occur within the classroom as evidence of the effectiveness of SWPBIS. All of the administrators supported and believed in SWPBIS. The majority of teachers supported SWPBIS; however, a minority still resisted the use of this framework and did not see the value of fully implementing it. Overall, there were minimal differences in perceptions between administrators and teachers of SWPBIS at the elementary school level.

Summary

This chapter provided an in-depth look at the experiences of 37 participants who had participated in SWPBIS at the elementary school level. The purpose of this collective case study was to explore and understand administrators' and teachers' perceptions on how a SWPBIS framework influences school climate at the elementary school level. The participants included administrators, teachers, counselors, and support personnel. Face-to-face interviews, focus group sessions, and analysis of relevant documents were utilized to identify the perceptions of administrators and teachers regarding the influence of SWPBIS on school climate. A thorough analysis of the data revealed four essential themes: (a) incentives influence behaviors, (b) consistency builds community, (c) mindset impacts relationships, and (d) support and challenges shape program perceptions.

The collective case study revealed that administrators and teachers perceive SWPBIS to have a positive influence of school climate. Participants revealed their experiences and identified

positive features of SWPBIS that increased desired behavior within the school setting. The use of rewards, focusing on the positives and recognition of positive behaviors, contributed to a healthier school climate. Implementing and sustaining SWPBIS over time has created a sense of community and increased comradery. Participants communicated the belief that having clear expectations throughout each environment within the school united all stakeholders.

Relationships between students, students and teachers, and among teachers became more positive and stronger due to SWPBIS. Teachers reported that support from their school's administrators was imperative in gaining teacher buy-in and changing mindsets. However, the study discovered that even though PBIS has been implemented school-wide, not every teacher was implementing it with fidelity. The participants reported that there are a small minority of teachers opposed to implementing certain features of SWPBIS. However, it was reported that all administrators within the schools studied supported and believed in SWPBIS.

This study also revealed that even though the school's administration was supportive of SWPBIS, there were still challenges to its sustainability. Funding was identified as being a major obstacle in the effectiveness of SWPBIS. The ability to provide meaningful rewards influences the effectiveness of SWPBIS and how teachers perceive it. Not all rewards have a financial cost but the schools were becoming creative in their fundraising efforts to cover the costs of providing more frequent and larger rewards. Participants identified older, veteran teachers as having a classroom management philosophy contradictory to the features of SWPBIS, which creates a struggle in implementing SWPBIS with fidelity. Participants also acknowledged that there is a greater rift between lower grade and upper grade teachers in the structure and execution of SWPBIS. Although there were challenges, the overall perception of the influence of SWPBIS on school climate was very similar between administrators and teachers.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

Discipline policies in American schools have changed over time to address behavioral, social, and cultural issues. Classrooms across the United States are becoming more culturally and economically diverse, which influences the learning environment (Lewis & Sugai, 1999; Sugai, et al., 2012). More schools are moving away from a zero-tolerance policy and adopting a SWPBIS framework to support student behavior and improve the school climate. In contrast to a zero-tolerance discipline policy, SWPBIS is proactive, teaches good character traits, reinforces positive behavior, and protects instructional time (Bradshaw et al., 2014). SWPBIS is associated with reduced problem behavior, increased emotional regulation, improved academic achievement, and higher staff morale (McIntosh, Kelm, & Delabra, 2016).

The purpose of this collective case study is to explore and understand administrators and teachers perceptions on how a SWPBIS framework influences school climate at the elementary school level. Specifically, the study seeks to gain a greater understanding of what administrators and teachers perceive as positive and negative factors of SWPBIS and its influence on the relationships of students and school staff. This chapter will provide a summary of the findings and a discussion of how these relate to the theoretical and empirical literature. The theoretical, empirical, and practical implications will then be discussed. Finally, the limitations of this collective case study and recommendations for future research will be addressed.

Summary of Findings

A collective case study design was used to explore administrators and teachers experiences of participating in a SWPBIS framework. Over the last several years, research

supporting the effectiveness of SWPBIS has increased rapidly and positive outcomes have been noted both academically and behaviorally (Cavanaugh & Swan, 2015). The majority of research regarding SWPBIS has focused on student outcomes, system process, and structures to support teacher implementation (Ross et al., 2012). Therefore, the present collective case study is significant in gaining a comprehensive understanding of how administrators and teachers perceive the influence of SWPBIS on school climate at the elementary school level.

In this collective case study, data was collected via relevant documents, face-to face interviews, and focus group sessions. One central research question and four subquestions guided this study to understand the experiences and perceptions of administrators and teachers. The following research questions guided this study:

Central Question: How do administrators and teachers perceive the influence of SWPBIS on school climate at the elementary school level?

Subquestion 1: What features of SWPBIS are perceived as having a positive influence on school climate at the elementary school level?

Subquestion 2: What features of SWPBIS are perceived as having a negative influence on school climate at the elementary school level?

Subquestion 3: How has SWPBIS influenced relationships among students and adults in the elementary school?

Subquestion 4: What are the differences in perceptions between administrators and teachers of SWPBIS at the elementary school level?

During the data analysis process, four themes emerged, these being (a) incentives influence behaviors, (b) consistency builds community, (c) mindset impacts relationships, and

(d) support and challenges shape program perceptions. Two or more of the four identified themes answered each of the research questions.

The themes suggest the following:

(1) The participants believed that incentives positively influenced the behavior of students, teachers, administrators, and other school staff. Tangible rewards, words of affirmation, and recognition were effective features of SWPBIS that improved school climate.

(2) Clear expectations set forth in the SWPBIS framework and used consistently throughout the school setting helped to foster a sense of community and unified stakeholders. Consistency in expectations, communication, and involvement from stakeholders were key components in building a positive school climate.

(3) Participants believed that attitudes towards SWPBIS had improved over time as more stakeholders experienced the benefits from it. The changing perceptions of SWPBIS have helped build positive relationships that have seen a decrease in problem behavior, increase in positive interactions, and improvement of school climate.

(4) Factors that shaped participants' perception of SWPBIS were administration support, administration engagement, resources, and classroom management philosophies. Participants believed that schools must be proactive and creative in overcoming obstacles to implementing and sustaining SWPBIS.

Central Question Findings

The central question sought to gain a greater understanding of how administrators and teachers perceive the influence of SWPBIS on school climate. All four themes that emerged provided insight and answered the central question. Administrators and teachers provided specific details, situations, and experiences that illustrated their belief that SWPBIS has a

positive influence on the school climate. Participants provided rich descriptions of how implementing SWPBIS changed the mindset and behaviors of students, teachers, and administrators resulting in a healthier school climate. The findings indicated that the participants were committed to overcoming challenges to improve their SWPBIS because they understood the benefits of SWPBIS.

Subquestion 1 Findings

Subquestion 1 focused on specific features of SWPBIS that administrators and teachers perceive as having a positive influence on school climate. This question was answered by two of the four themes that emerged from this study, which were theme one, incentives influences behavior; and theme two, consistency builds community. The findings of this research study show that incentives such as school money/points, reward days, positive reinforcement, and recognition were effective features of SWPBIS that increased motivation, built a sense of community, and strengthened relational bonds. Participants revealed that SWPBIS provided opportunities to focus on positive behavior, which helped to build constructive relationships. The study found that consistency in implementing SWPBIS and teaching clear expectations was essential for sustaining an effective SWPBIS framework that improved school climate.

Subquestion 2 Findings

Subquestion 2 focused on specific features of SWPBIS that administrators and teachers perceive as having a negative influence on school climate. This question was answered by two of the themes, which were theme one, incentives influence behavior; and theme two, consistency builds community. The participants did not specifically indicate any features of SWPBIS that had a negative influence on school climate. However, three participants shared concerns that

rewards may foster a sense of entitlement in students and not adequately prepare them for real world experiences. The findings illustrate that SWPBIS does not contain any features that are detrimental or have a negative influence on school climate.

Subquestion 3 Findings

Subquestion 3 investigated how SWPBIS has influenced relationships between students and adults in the elementary school. This question was answered by three of the themes, which were theme one, incentives influence behavior; theme two, consistency builds community; and theme three, mindset impacts relationships. The participants collectively shared the belief that SWPBIS has improved relationships between students, between students and teachers, and among school staff. The study revealed that SWPBIS allowed opportunities for students to learn quality character traits and encouraged them to take on a leadership role within all areas of the school climate. The findings show that students and adults were motivated by rewards and recognition to act in a positive manner. This resulted in interactions that are more positive and created a sense of mutual respect, caring, and belonging.

Subquestion 4 Findings

Subquestion 4 examined the differences between administrators and teachers of SWPBIS at the elementary level. This question was answered by three of the four themes, which were theme one, incentives influence behavior; theme three, mindset impacts relationships; and theme four, support and challenges shape program perceptions. All administrators who participated in the research study perceived SWPBIS as being instrumental to the development and continuation of a healthy, constructive, and safe school climate. The teachers in the study reported that they believe all the administrators at their school supported SWPBIS and saw the value in the

framework. The participants communicated that the majority of teachers supported SWPBIS but a minority of teachers resisted implementing all features of the framework. Teacher buy-in has increased over time but support is not at full capacity. The participants reported that opposing classroom management philosophies and the extra time and effort required for SWPBIS were the greatest barriers for complete buy-in. However, the findings indicated minimal differences in the perceptions of administrators and teachers of SWPBIS.

Discussion

The following is a discussion of the findings in relation to the theoretical and empirical literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The literature review included information on the theoretical underpinnings of SWPBIS and relevant literature regarding administrators and teachers perception of SWPBIS and its influence on school climate. The collective case study was grounded in B. F. Skinner's theory of operant behavior and applied behavior analysis. In addition, the literature review examined issues of school discipline, the historical development of SWPBIS, SWPBIS implementation, and the effectiveness of SWPBIS. The findings from this study support the theoretical framework that framed the study along with the empirical literature.

Discussion of the Theoretical Framework

B. F. Skinner formulated the theory of operant behavior through the lens of behaviorism, which explains that over time an individual will interact and respond to their environmental circumstances in an attempt to produce a reward (Byrne, 2006; Hanson et al., 2014; Moore, 2011; Staddon & Cerutti, 2003). This is relevant to school behavior as administrators and teachers seek to find ways to increase positive behaviors and decrease negative behaviors. In the theory of operant behavior, reinforcers are utilized to increase the frequency of desired behavior

or decrease the frequency of negative behavior (Byrne, 2006). The findings from the present study indicated that the use of reinforcers increased the frequency of positive behaviors of students and adults within the school setting. Behavioral expectations and reinforcers can be applied to all students in all settings (Boneshefski & Runge, 2014) thereby influencing school-wide behavior. The study showed that having clear expectations and communicating these expectations in a precise manner improved student behavior in areas outside the classroom such as hallways, restrooms, lunchroom, and playground.

In Skinner's operant theory, there are two main types of reinforcers that influence an individual's behavior; positive reinforcers and negative reinforcers. Positive reinforcers produce certain stimulus events and as a result, the operants increase in frequency (Bijou & Baer, 1961). SWPBIS utilizes positive reinforcers to help students learn desired behaviors and to respond in an appropriate manner. In this study, participants reported that specific features of SWPBIS were utilized as positive reinforcers to influence behavior and improve school climate. The findings indicated that the use of rewards such as school money/points, reward days, and special privileges were positive reinforcers that were effective in producing desired behaviors. The findings also identified words of affirmation, focusing on the positives, and recognition as specific features of SWPBIS that were effective as positive reinforcers. The positive reinforcers motivated students and adults to adhere to the clear expectations and positively interact with their environment.

ABA emphasizes that human behavior is learned and is modifiable through environmental adjustments (Sugai et al., 2012). The results of the present study show that students have learned quality character traits and leadership skills through adjusting to the school environment. ABA also emphasizes the application of behavioral principles to applied problems

to help people enhance the quality of their lives (Gambrill, 2012; Sugai, 2007). Based on the findings of the present study, features of SWPBIS addressed specific areas of behavior, which increased positive behavior, improved the learning environment, and strengthened relational bonds. These results have enhanced the quality of the lives of students, teachers, and administrators, as well as fostering a positive school climate.

ABA includes attention to environmental influences and evaluating the changes that occur in behavior due to the process of analytical behavioral application (Baer et al., 1968; Gambrill, 2012). Participants revealed that behavioral data is collected and analyzed to evaluate the changes in behavior caused by implementing SWPBIS. The analyzed data is also used to identify areas of weakness that need to be addressed. The data collected is analyzed by the SWPBIS team and grade level teams to create specific plans and select reinforcers to meet the unique needs of their students. In ABA, a reinforcer is consistently applied toward specific student outcomes where the desired behavior will occur more frequently (Cooper, 1982). The findings of the present study indicated that consistency in communicating clear expectations, providing incentives, and sharing a common goal creates a sense of community within the school. The change in environmental influences motivates students to increase the frequency of the desired behavior, which helps enhance the school climate. The findings of the study confirm and corroborate the theory of operant behavior, ABA, and previous research on the topic.

Discussion of the Related Literature

It is imperative that students conduct themselves in a positive, constructive manner at school to protect instructional time, achieve academic success, and have positive social experiences. However, the literature suggests that a growing number of students are coming to school without the prerequisite social skills and supports needed to be successful in the

educational setting (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). The aversive consequences of zero-tolerance and harsh disciplinary policies were contributing to greater problems and were harmful to the school climate. Therefore, schools began researching and implementing SWPBIS to combat these problems. SWPBIS offers constructive ways to preemptively address the function of behavior in both environmental and individual contexts and emerged as an alternative to more exclusionary and punitive forms of school-wide discipline (Marchant et al., 2012; Solomon et al., 2012). While there were numerous quantitative studies on SWPBIS implementation and effectiveness, there was a lack of literature on the perceptions of administrators and teachers towards SWPBIS.

SWPBIS emphasizes the importance of teaching and reinforcing appropriate behavior, with the literature suggesting that schools adopting this proactive approach will see an increase in prosocial behavior and eventually academic achievement (Muscott et al., 2004; Sharkey & Fenning, 2012). The participants communicated that SWPBIS provides structured time to teach appropriate behaviors and to reward students for their prosocial behaviors. A SWPBIS framework expands the scope of the entire school, including structured locations such as in classrooms, but also unstructured areas such as the hallway, restroom, and playground (Sherrod et al., 2009). According to the participants, clear expectations and other features of SWPBIS were implemented to include the entire school setting and all stakeholders. Participants also reported a decline in behavioral problems and office referrals stemming from incidents occurring in the classrooms, lunchroom, hallways, and playground.

Previous studies have reported that students at a SWPBIS school clearly understand the expected behaviors and rewards, which results in a safe and respectable school climate (Betts et al., 2014; Coffey & Horner, 2012). When examining the influence of SWPBIS on school climate, the participants revealed that students were taught the expected behaviors in all areas of

the school setting. The expectations and desired behaviors were clearly and consistently communicated through lessons, strategically positioned posters, reminders on the daily announcements, and other means of communication. Participants reflected on how the students understood the expectations and even encouraged their classmates to follow them. The present study found that decreased negative behaviors, increased positive interactions, and a respectable school climate were benefits of consistent and clear expectations of SWPBIS.

Past research shows that SWPBIS reduces behavior problems, aggression, and office referrals, as well as improves prosocial behaviors (Bradshaw et al., 2012; Feuerborn & Tyre, 2012). When investigating how SWPBIS has influenced relationships, participants reported that the intensity and frequency of behavior problems have declined. School data illustrated the decline in office referrals and provided examples where SWPBIS had prevented negative behaviors. In alignment with previous research, the present study found that SWPBIS had decreased negative behaviors, increased prosocial behaviors, and created a warm learning environment.

A positive school climate is developed by providing students with a comprehensive educational experience targeting academics, social/emotional, ethical, and behavioral skills in a safe, caring learning environment (Wang et al., 2013). One major goal of SWPBIS is to establish a positive school and classroom atmosphere through a practical, lifestyle approach (Caldarella et al., 2011; Osman, 2012). SWPBIS expectations are directly taught, consistently acknowledged, and actively monitored, which directly influences school climate (Osman, 2012). The participants communicated examples of how expectations are directly taught to students via lesson plans for them to apply the lessons within the school environment in a practical way. The

study found that when behavior is actively monitored and consistently acknowledged it changes the mindset of students, which results in a higher frequency of prosocial behaviors.

Previous studies on school climate have showed that teachers' perceptions of their work environment were influenced by relationships, leadership in the organization, and feelings of inclusion (Osman, 2012; Thapa et al., 2013). The results of the present study indicated that SWPBIS influenced each of these factors. Participants communicated that SWPBIS has positively affected relationships between students, students and teachers, and among teachers, which helped them value school stakeholders as a family. All of the teachers that participated in the study firmly believe that their administration supports SWPBIS and diligently works to make it successful. In addition, the participants reported that SWPBIS has made them more aware of the actions of others and positive behaviors are recognized more frequently. Participants revealed that the acknowledgement and respect shown for exceeding expectations made them feel more valued and improved school climate.

Effective administrators proactively address barriers to developing and maintaining an orderly school climate and model the behaviors they expect of students and staff (Protheroe, 2011). Hanson et al. (2014) found that school administrators are critical members in the implementation of SWPBIS and in developing the social climate of positive interactions. Consistent with these findings, the present study found that administration buy-in and support were critical components of successfully implementing and sustaining SWPBIS. The study revealed that administrators who were active in data analysis, engaged in training, participated in essential components of SWPBIS, and were actively involved in reward days motivated students and teachers to support SWPBIS, thereby strengthening implementation and sustainability. The

present study also found that over time support for SWPBIS grew, resulting in a more cohesive and positive school climate.

Implications

The results of the present study have theoretical, empirical, and practical implications. These findings might prove beneficial to school systems and individual schools that are in the decision making process about implementing SWPBIS or trying to sustain their SWPBIS successfully. Additionally, by exploring administrators and teachers perceptions, the results from the present study aims to add to the existing literature regarding SWPBIS and provide key insights that will be helpful to educators as they strive to reduce problem behaviors, promote prosocial behaviors, and improve school climate.

Theoretical Implications

The results of this collective case study provide support for B. F. Skinner's theory of operant behavior and ABA where an individual's behaviors can be influenced by reinforcers and they will develop learned behaviors over time (Byrne, 2006; Malone, 2003; Sugai et al., 2012; Trask & Bouton, 2014). ABA emphasizes that human behavior is learned and is modifiable through environmental adjustments (Sugai et al., 2012). The present collective case study found that specific reinforcers influenced the behaviors of students and adults within each elementary school. A quality SWPBIS framework can select reinforcers specifically to meet the needs of the stakeholders within the school to properly motivate and influence behaviors to reach a desired result. Additional support for the two theories that grounded this study was developed through relevant documents, face-to-face interviews, and focus group sessions.

The participants revealed experiences of how specific features of SWPBIS have helped to increase self-esteem, promote prosocial behaviors, strengthened relational bonds, and positively influenced school climate. ABA seeks to enhance the quality of life for people by creative applications of basic behavioral principles (Gambrill, 2012). The present study found that through a SWPBIS framework, schools are utilizing behavioral principles that have resulted in a higher quality of life for students, teachers, and administrators.

Theoretical implications can also be concluded from the present study when utilizing the theory of positive behavior support as a framework. The collective case study extended the application of ABA that contributes to the theory of positive behavior and support, which focuses on positive reinforcement to support a student's performance of socially desirable target behaviors (Solomon et al., 2012). The participants of the study emphasized the use of data analysis and incorporating evidence-based behavioral strategies to prevent negative behaviors and promote prosocial behaviors. Data was analyzed by the SWPBIS team and grade level teams. It was revealed by the study that focusing on lifestyle choices and character traits supported by the use of positive reinforcers improved the quality of the school climate. The use of positive reinforcements, verbal or tangible, motivated students to reach the socially desirable target behaviors established through SWPBIS.

Empirical Implications

This collective case study expanded research on SWPBIS and its influence on school climate by focusing on the perceptions of administrators and teachers. The present study supported other research that showed SWPBIS prevented the occurrence of problem behavior, provided opportunities to teach clearly defined behavior expectations, allowed participation in school-wide data-based decision making, and promoted function-based interventions and

supports (Brandt et al., 2014; Horner et al., 2014; Sharkey & Fenning, 2012; Sugai, 2007). The present study also reinforced other research that reported that SWPBIS decreases office referrals, promotes prosocial interactions, fosters positive relationships, and improves school climate (Bradshaw et al., 2012, 2014; Fitzgerald et al., 2014; Flannery et al., 2014; Gage et al., 2015; McIntosh, Ty, et al., 2014). In addition, the study supported research that identified administration support and buy-in as key components to successful implementation and sustainability of SWPBIS (Debnam et al., 2011; Matthews et al., 2014; McIntosh, Kelm et al., 2014; Printy & Williams, 2015).

Practical Implications

The findings in the present collective case study provide key insights that can be applied in the decision making process to implement SWPBIS or to support the likelihood of sustainability. The results from the study also identify important factors that encourage teacher buy-in and support. From the findings, specific recommendations are made for central office personnel, school administrators, and teachers.

Recommendations for Central Office Personnel

Central office personnel are responsible for making sound decisions that affect the students, school staff, teachers, administrators, and parents within their district. Therefore, it is vital that they have an abundance of pertinent information, useful insights, and scientifically based research to make the most appropriate decisions for their district. The present study provides central office personnel qualitative data from the perspective of administrators and teachers on SWPBIS and its influence on school climate. The participants in the collective case study provided detail rich data that would be valuable in the decision making process regarding implementation and sustainability.

The participants identified specific areas of concerns that need to be addressed at the district level to have a more effective SWPBIS. Participants communicated their concern that each of the three elementary schools within the district operated their SWPBIS differently, which skewed the data when making a comparison between the elementary schools. During the PES focus group session, Brittney revealed,

I wish we had more consistency in our system. I have run into problems because they don't do this at another elementary school or they do this at another elementary school.

We are big rule followers here so we go by the guidelines. So why can't they? There are only three elementary schools in our district so we should be more consistent in PBIS. Connie continued by indicating that "in a small community like we're in, the elementary schools are constantly being compared to each other." The SWPBIS guidelines established by the district in accordance with GaDOE policies should be consistently and fairly enforced to ensure that each school within the district is operating under the same rules. When this is achieved, comparisons between the elementary schools will provide more credible and useful information.

One of the biggest challenges identified in this collective case study was funding for SWPBIS to provide higher quality and greater variety of incentives and at a higher rate. Because SWPBIS is a district wide initiative and framework, more funds and resources should be allocated to operate it adequately. The participants felt that if the students had a greater variety of rewards, bigger rewards, or could receive rewards at a higher frequency then they would be more motivated to engage in prosocial behavior.

Recommendations for School Administrators

School administrators play a vital role in the effectiveness of SWPBIS implementation and sustainability. The findings of the present study provide administrators with qualitative data

to develop or revise specific components of SWPBIS to increase teacher buy-in and improve school climate. Understanding the perceptions of teachers would be beneficial in determining specific factors that can promote or harm implementing and sustaining SWPBIS.

The participants in the present study strongly felt that their administrators were supportive of SWPBIS. Administrator involvement in specific features of SWPBIS, such as data analysis, incentives, and recognition were identified as having a positive impact on teacher buy-in. School staff believed the administrators did an effective job at clearly communicating with staff and students the expectations of SWPBIS and their appreciation for behavior that exceeded expectations.

The participants did suggest that the administration should ensure more equity in distributing rewards. Additionally, participants felt that the administration should work to provide various or rotating reward days to prevent the students from becoming complacent and unmotivated. During her interview, Martha acknowledged that they “need to come up with more creative ideas of rewards because what kids like today they may not like next week.”

Recommendations for Teachers

Teachers could benefit from the data of this collective case study by understanding the strengths and weaknesses of a SWPBIS framework from another teacher’s perspective. Teachers would have a deeper understanding of specific features of SWPBIS and the influence a SWPBIS framework has on school climate. Teachers would also gain a greater idea of what factors have influenced other teachers in similar roles to buy-in and support SWPBIS. Therefore, teachers may be more receptive to implementation or have more guidance on how to sustain SWPBIS effectively.

Participants reported that the administration had set specific times within the school schedule to teach expectations and good character traits. However, participants reported that the lessons and planning process needed to be more comprehensive and engaging. Sharon indicated that they “need to train the kids better” but that “every year we get a little better.” Teachers should collaborate more in the planning and sharing of lesson plans that teach expectations and good character traits.

The study revealed that maintaining and tracking rewards, such as school money or points, is a challenge that hindered full implementation and negatively affected the mindset of some teachers. Participants reported that the tracking process was time consuming and cumbersome. Recommendations are made to utilize a program such as Class Dojo on an electronic device to track and maintain school money or points. Using a program on an electronic device would also give teachers who are departmentalized a method of tracking that allows other teachers to view their data. This would be especially helpful in upper grades when students have more than just one teacher.

Limitations

This collective case study contains limitations and weaknesses that are inherent in qualitative research studies. One facet that placed a limitation on the study is that I was the only researcher to conduct interviews and focus group sessions. In addition, I was the only one who analyzed relevant documents and coded the data. During the data collection and data analysis, I followed research protocols and allowed the participants’ words to drive the coding process. Data was categorically collected and organized to allow me to identify the common themes that emerged, which showed to what extent a SWPBIS framework influences school climate from the perspective of administrators and teachers.

Other limitations to the present study are the demographics and geographic location of the MVSS, as well as the number and characteristics of the participants. The MVSS is located in a rural community in north Georgia. The demographics of the county and school system mirror each other, with a predominantly Caucasian, economically disadvantaged population. The participants were purposefully selected due to their role and experiences within an elementary school that has implemented SWPBIS. There were 37 participants in the collective case study including elementary school administrators, counselors, teachers, and other school staff. The demographic composition of the participants reflects the demographics of the county and school system. However, the findings of the present study and the themes that emerged may not be transferable or generalized to other school districts.

Another limitation to the collective case study is the possibility that administrators and teachers may not have fully disclosed their honest perceptions regarding SWPBIS. Some participants may have a stake in the success of SWPBIS, while others may resist the tenants of SWPBIS for professional or personal reasons. However, the researcher does not have control of staff biases for or against SWPBIS. Participants may not have been completely forthcoming about their perceptions of SWPBIS because of the reaction of others, especially superiors. In an effort to maintain the confidentiality of each participant, pseudonyms were used for each school and participant, interview and focus group session procedures were established, and data storage security measures were followed.

Recommendations for Future Research

This collective case study provided relevant information regarding the perceptions of administrators and teachers toward SWPBIS and its influence on school climate. This research study added to the body of literature regarding SWPBIS but it also revealed several

recommendations for future research. The present study focused solely on the perceptions of elementary school administrators and teachers. Future research should focus on how other stakeholders perceive SWPBIS and its influence on school climate. Understanding SWPBIS from the students' perspective would broaden the scope of information available and help schools be more efficient and effective in successfully implementing and sustaining SWPBIS.

Another recommendation for future research is to expand on the findings of this study by conducting a similar collective case study in a school system with a different geographic location and demographics. The present study was conducted in a small rural school system with a predominately Caucasian population, whereas a future study could be conducted in an urban setting with a more diverse population. The perception of SWPBIS and its influence on school climate in a more diverse, urban setting may uncover different themes to those found in the present study. Additionally, future research is recommended to explore the perceptions of administrators and teachers at the middle school or high school level.

A SWPBIS framework is intended to improve behavior and increase prosocial interactions by teaching students appropriate ways to interact with their environment (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Sharkey & Fenning, 2012). This collective case study examined how SWPBIS influenced relationships within the school environment and how it has affected school climate. Future research could extend the setting to include how SWPBIS has influenced relationships outside of the school environment, by exploring the impact of SWPBIS in the home environment, and how it has influenced relationships within families.

Summary

The purpose of this collective case study was to explore and understand administrators' and teachers' perceptions on how a SWPBIS framework influences school climate at the

elementary school level. A qualitative research design and methodology was appropriate for the collective case study because the data collected was rich in descriptions of people, places, and phenomena that are not easily handled by statistical procedures (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In conducting the research study, the factors that contributed to the formation of administrators' and teachers' perceptions of SWPBIS were explored. This collective case study contributed to the existing literature by providing information and resources to school districts to improve the implementation and sustainability of a SWPBIS framework. The experiences of 37 participants were explored and, during the data analysis process, four themes emerged.

Although previous research studies regarding SWPBIS have been conducted, few have addressed the perceptions of administrators and teachers. In addition, the majority of the research studies were quantitative in nature. The present collective case study was able to explore by first-hand accounts the experiences of participants working within a SWPBIS framework. The research questions that guided the study allowed for a rich, detailed description of the influence that a SWPBIS framework has on school climate at the elementary school level. The participants' responses and answers to the research questions address gaps in the literature and provide school districts with insight into the decision making process on how to successfully implement and sustain a SWPBIS framework.

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER**LIBERTY UNIVERSITY**
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

November 2, 2015

H. David Cawthon

IRB Approval 2291.110215: A Collective Case Study on Elementary School Administrators' and Teachers' Perceptions of a School-Wide, Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports Framework

Dear David,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

**LIBERTY**
UNIVERSITY.

Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971

APPENDIX B: IRB SUPERINTENDENT PERMISSION REQUEST LETTER

September 9, 2015

Mr. _____

Superintendent

_____ County School District

Address

Dear Superintendent:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree. The title of my research project is *A Collective Case Study on Elementary School Administrators' and Teachers' Perceptions of a School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports Framework*. The purpose of my research is to collect and analyze qualitative data about the perceptions of administrators and teachers concerning the influence of a SWPBIS framework on school climate. The findings from the case study will provide Georgia educators with valuable insights and information as they create, implement, and sustain an effective SWPBIS.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research at _____ Elementary School, _____ Elementary School, and _____ Elementary School in your district. I am also requesting your permission to contact the building administrators and the teachers they select to invite them to participate in the case study.

Participants will be asked to attend an individual interview session or a focus group session. The administrators will be asked to share any documents regarding the policies, processes, and evaluation of the SWPBIS. The study will not need any documents that contain private and confidential student or educator information. The data will be used to gain a deeper understanding of how participants perceive the SWPBIS and its influence on school climate. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please respond by email to david.cawthon@stephenscountyschools.org. In your response please attach a district permission statement for your schools to participate in educational research on official school system letterhead.

Sincerely,
David Cawthon, Graduate Student

Liberty University
hdcauthon@liberty.edu

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM

A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY ON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' AND TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF A SCHOOL-WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION AND SUPPORTS FRAMEWORK

David Cawthon
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of administrators' and teachers' perceptions on how a School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (SWPBIS) framework influences school climate at the elementary school level. You were selected as a possible participant because of your experiences in an elementary school that has implemented SWPBIS. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by David Cawthon, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is explore and gain a deeper understanding of how administrators and teachers perceive the influence a SWPBIS framework has on school climate.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. If you are a school administrator, participate in a semi-structured interview session at your school building that consists of 12 open-ended questions and will take approximately 30-45 minutes. The interview will be digitally recorded and transcribed for analysis purposes. All answers will remain confidential.
2. If you are a school administrator, provide documentation and artifacts regarding SWPBIS policies, procedures, evaluation process, and effectiveness. Electronic copies of documents will be safely stored on the researcher's password protected computer. Hard copies will be safely stored in a secured filing cabinet in a locked office. All copies will be disposed of properly at the appropriate time.
3. If you are a teacher, participate in a semi-structured interview session at your school building that consists of 12 open-ended questions and will take approximately 30-60 minutes. The interview will be digitally recorded and transcribed for analysis purposes. All answers will remain confidential.

4. If you are a member of the SWPBIS Team, participate in a semi-structured focus group session at your school building that consists of 10 open-ended questions and will take approximately 30-45 minutes. The focus group will be digitally recorded and transcribed for analysis purposes. All answers will remain confidential.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

The risks involved in this study are minimal and no more than you would experience in everyday life.

There are no direct benefits that you will receive by participating in this study. The benefits of participating in the study are societal and educational because of gaining a deeper understanding of a SWPBIS framework from the perspective of administrators and teachers. Findings from the study will benefit school district and building leaders in identifying specific areas of concerns that need to be addressed in order to successfully implement and sustain an effective SWPBIS. Teachers will benefit by gaining valuable information regarding the positive and negative influences that certain features of a SWPBIS framework may have on the school climate.

Compensation:

You will not be compensated for your participation in this study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records.

All participants responses to individual interview questions and focus group questions will be digitally recorded (audio only) and professionally transcribed. Recorded and electronic files will be securely stored on a password protected computer file. All transcriptions and notes will be stored with other research data in a locked filing cabinet in a secure office. All data will be destroyed by electronically deleting the files, and hard copies will be shredded accordingly after three years of completing the study. Only the researcher, David Cawthon, will have access to the data collected through the study. Pseudonyms will be used for the school system, participating schools, and participants. All individual interview responses will remain confidential. However, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed for focus groups session responses because I cannot assure participants of the focus group will maintain confidentiality and privacy.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study:

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at hdcawthon@liberty.edu. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed

immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is David Cawthon. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at hdcawthon@liberty.edu. You may also contact the research's faculty advisor, Dr. Angela Smith, at amsmith11@liberty.edu

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Carter 134, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Open-Ended Interview Questions

Features of a SWPBIS

1. What rewards or reinforcers does your school give on a regular basis?
2. What do you like most about your school's PBIS?
3. What features of your school's PBIS do you feel contribute to a positive school climate?
4. What do you like least about your school's PBIS?
5. What features of your school's PBIS do you feel may be detrimental to a positive school climate?

SWPBIS Influence on Relationships

6. How have the relationships among students changed as a result of implementing your school's PBIS?
7. How have the relationships between students and their teachers changed as a result of implementing your school's PBIS?
8. How have the relationships among teachers changed as a result of implementing your school's PBIS?

Perceptions of Administrators and Teachers

9. How do you think other teachers and administrators feel about your school's PBIS?
10. How do you think inappropriate behaviors in your school have changed as a result of a SWPBIS?
11. How do you think the school climate has changed as a result of a SWPBIS?
12. What suggestions do you have that could improve your school's PBIS?

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FORM

SWPBIS Interview Protocol Form

School:

Interviewee (Title and Name):

Interviewer: David Cawthon

A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY ON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' AND TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF A SCHOOL-WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION AND SUPPORTS FRAMEWORK

My name is David Cawthon. I am a doctoral candidate with Liberty University. I am conducting a case study to explore administrators' and teachers' perceptions on how a School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports framework influences school climate at the elementary school level.

Your superintendent and principal have been gracious enough to grant me permission to conduct my case study at your school. You were recommended by your administrator to participate in a face-to-face interview to discuss your school's PBIS. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes. All data will be confidential and pseudonyms will be used for all schools and participants. This study will not collect any private or personal information about any participant or students.

To help speed up the interview and ensure accuracy I would like to record our conversation today. Only myself and transcriber will have access to your responses.

Please sign the Participant Consent Form. (Distribute and discuss Consent Form)

Are there any questions before we begin?

If it is OK with you, I will turn on the recorder and start now.

Interview Beginning Data:

Today is December _____, 2015. It is _____ am/pm. This interview is with
_____ (teacher 3A) at _____ Elementary School.

I. Interviewee Background

1. How long have you been in education?
2. How long have you been in your current position?
3. How long have you been in this school?
4. What is your highest degree?
5. What field is your degree in?

II. Begin Open-Ended Interview Questions

APPENDIX F: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Open-Ended Focus Group Questions

Features of a SWPBIS

1. From your experiences, what rewards or reinforcers that your school uses are the most effective? Why?
2. What is an example of how you have used or seen features of your school's PBIS prevent negative behavior and improve school climate?
3. When is a time that you've seen where your school's PBIS has failed to prevent negative behavior and hurt school climate?

SWPBIS Influence on Relationships

4. How do you think your school's PBIS has influenced relationships among students?
5. How do you think your school's PBIS has influenced relationships between students and teachers?
6. How do you think your school's PBIS has influenced relationships among teachers?

Perceptions of Administrators and Teachers

7. How do you think teachers feel about your school's PBIS?
8. How do you think administrators feel about your school's PBIS?
9. How do you think your school's PBIS has influenced the overall school climate?
10. As your school's PBIS team, what would you recommend to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of your school's PBIS?

APPENDIX G: FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL FORM

SWPBIS Focus Group Protocol Form

School:

Interviewee (Title and Name):

Interviewer: David Cawthon

A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY ON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' AND TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF A SCHOOL-WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION AND SUPPORTS FRAMEWORK

My name is David Cawthon. I am a doctoral candidate with Liberty University. I am conducting a case study to explore administrators' and teachers' perceptions on how a School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports framework influences school climate at the elementary school level.

Your superintendent and principal have been gracious enough to grant me permission to conduct my case study at your school. You were chosen to participate in a focus group session to discuss your school's PBIS. The focus group session will last approximately 30 minutes. All data will be confidential and pseudonyms will be used for all schools and participants. This study will not collect any private or personal information about any participant or students.

To help speed up the focus group session and ensure accuracy I would like to record our discussion today. Only myself and transcriber will have access to your responses.

Please sign the Participant Consent Form. (Distribute and discuss Consent Form)

I'm here to learn from you and I want to hear from everyone. (Informal) Every person's experiences and opinions are important. Because our discussion will be recorded it is important that you speak up and that you only speak one at a time. I don't want to miss any of your comments. Please feel free to respond to each other and to speak directly to others in the group. Are there any questions before we begin?

If it is OK with you, I will turn on the recorder and start now.

Interview Beginning Data:

Today is December _____, 2015. It is _____ am/pm. This focus group session is with Focus Group _____ at _____ Elementary School. There are _____ (#) participants.

I. Interviewee Background

1. Please briefly describe your role at this school, how long you've been at this school, and your educational background? (highest degree?, field degree is in?)

II. Begin Open-Ended Focus Group Questions

APPENDIX H: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

	Name	Position	Years in Education	Highest Degree	Gender	Ethnicity
1	Carol	1st grade teacher	27	master's in curriculum and instruction	F	W
2	Tamara	1st grade teacher	23	specialist degree in administration	F	W
3	Diana	2nd grade teacher	11	specialist degree in leadership	F	W
4	Katie	2nd Grade Teacher	25	specialist degree in early childhood education	F	W
5	Kathy	2nd Grade Teacher	16	master's degree in early childhood education	F	W
6	Wanda	3rd Grade Teacher	11	specialist degree in curriculum and instruction	F	W
7	Melissa	3rd Grade Teacher	28	specialist degree in leadership	F	W
8	Elizabeth	3rd Grade Teacher	6	bachelor's degree in early childhood education	F	W
9	Sarah	3rd Grade Teacher	11	bachelor's degree in early childhood education	F	W
10	Marley	3rd Grade Teacher	5	specialist degree in technology and learning	F	W
11	Micah	4th Grade Teacher	24	specialist degree in administration	M	W

12	Beth	4th Grade Teacher	25	specialist degree in instructional technology	F	W
13	Kay	5th Grade Teacher	10	master's degree in early childhood education	F	W
14	Andrea	5th Grade Teacher	4	specialist degree in early childhood education	F	W
15	Sandy	5th Grade Teacher	4	master's degree in curriculum and instruction	F	W
16	April	5th Grade Teacher	6	master's degree in mathematics	F	W
17	Saige	5th Grade Teacher	23	specialist degree in curriculum and instruction	F	W
18	Connie	Academic Coach	9	master's in curriculum and instruction	F	W
19	Bryan	Academic Coach	20	master's degree in curriculum and instruction	M	W
20	Alexander	Administrator	4	specialist degree in leadership	M	W
21	Hillary	Administrator	13	specialist degree in leadership	F	W
22	Martha	Administrator	20	specialist degree in leadership	F	W
23	Brittney	Counselor	3	specialist degree in counseling	F	W
24	Peter	Counselor	13	Specialist in Counseling	M	W

25	Laura	Counselor	6	specialist degree in counseling	F	W
26	Jodi	Kindergarten Teacher	17	master's degree in curriculum and instruction	F	W
27	Shauna	Kindergarten Teacher	8	specialist degree in curriculum and instruction	F	W
28	Sharon	Kindergarten Teacher	17	master's degree in early childhood education	F	W
29	Robyn	Kindergarten Teacher	15	master's degree in early childhood education	F	W
30	June	Kindergarten Teacher	7	specialist degree in early childhood education	F	W
31	Anita	Music Teacher	4	bachelor's degree in music education	F	W
32	Marlene	Parent Liaison	2	high school diploma	F	W
33	Timothy	PE Teacher	1	bachelor's degree in physical education	M	W
34	Christine	Special Education Paraprofessional	4	high school diploma	F	W
35	Ashley	Special Education Teacher	33	master's degree in special education	F	W
36	Heather	Special Education Teacher	13	specialist degree in curriculum and instruction	F	W
37	Lynn	Special Education Teacher	5	master's degree in special education	F	W

APPENDIX I: CODE FREQUENCY CHART

Code	Frequency from Documents	Frequency from Interviews	Frequency from Focus Groups	Frequency Total
Rewards	42	38	21	101
Communication	54	18	12	84
Consistency	39	28	17	84
Expectations	42	21	13	76
Focus on Positives	30	25	16	71
Attitude	21	31	15	67
Community	24	21	13	58
Buy-In	6	34	15	55
Accountability	42	7	3	52
Recognition	15	22	12	49
Student-Teacher Relationships	12	21	15	48
School Climate	6	25	16	47
Motivation	0	26	15	41
Student-Student Relationships	9	18	12	39
Attainable Goals	21	10	7	38
Unity	6	18	12	36
Administration Support	6	16	8	30
Teacher Support	12	11	7	30
Teacher-Teacher Relationships	0	17	12	29
Funds	12	10	6	28
Resistance	0	17	10	27
Involvement	9	10	7	26
Resources	9	11	6	26
Training	12	6	8	26
Classroom Management				
Philosophies	3	12	7	22
Improvements	0	15	7	22
Developmental Age	3	11	7	21
Appreciation	0	11	7	18
Buses	12	2	4	18
Comradery	0	11	5	16
Entitlement	0	7	5	12

APPENDIX J: CODE CLASSIFICATION CHART

Theme	Codes	Code Frequency Total
Incentives Influence Behaviors	Rewards	101
	Focus on Positives	71
	Recognition	49
	Motivation	41
	Appreciation	18
Consistency Builds Community	Communication	84
	Consistency	84
	Expectations	76
	Community	58
	Accountability	52
	Attainable Goals	38
	Unity	36
	Involvement	26
	Comradery	16
Mindset Impacts Relationships	Attitude	67
	Buy-In	55
	Student-Teacher Relationships	48
	School Climate	47
	Student-Student Relationships	39
	Teacher-Teacher Relationships	29
	Resistance	27
	Entitlement	12
Support and Challenges Shape Program Perceptions	Administration Support	30
	Teacher Support	30
	Funds	28
	Training	26
	Resources	26
	Classroom Management	
	Philosophies	22
	Improvements	22
	Developmental Age	21
	Buses	18

APPENDIX K: SUB-THEME CLASSIFICATION CHART

Theme	Sub-Theme	Codes
Incentives Influence Behaviors	Rewards	Rewards
	Recognition and appreciation	Recognition Appreciation
	Focus on the positives	Focus on Positives
	Motivation	Focus on Positives
Consistency Builds Community	Expectations	Attainable Goals Expectations
	Consistency	Accountability Consistency Involvement
	Community	Community Communication Unity Comradery
Mindset Impacts Relationships	Buy-In and resistance	Buy-In Resistance Entitlement Attitude
	Relational bonds	Student-Teacher Relationships School Climate Student-Student Relationships Teacher-Teacher Relationships
Support and Challenges Shape Program Perceptions	Administration support	Administration Support Teacher Support

Resources

Resources

Funds

Training

Classroom management
philosophies

Classroom Management
Philosophies
Developmental Age

Improvements

Improvements

Buses

APPENDIX L: TRANSCRIBER CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT**Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement****A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY ON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' AND
TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF A SCHOOL-WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR
INTERVENTION AND SUPPORTS FRAMEWORK**

Liberty University
IRB Approval 2291.110215

As the transcriber for this collective case study I agree that I will:

1. Keep all of the information from the audio recordings from the research study confidential.
2. Not discuss or share the information from the research study in any way or format with anyone other than the researcher.
3. Keep all research information in any format secure while it is in my possession.
4. Give all of the transcripts and other information in any format to the researcher when I have completed the research tasks.
5. Erase or destroy all research information in any format that is not returnable to researcher upon completion of the research tasks.

Transcriptionist signature: _____ Date: _____

Transcriptionist printed name: _____

Researcher signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher printed name: _____