PUT ME IN COACH: A TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY
EXAMINING SCHOOL WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT COACHES’
EXPERIENCE WITH PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

by
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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe lived experience during School Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) implementation for School Wide Positive Behavior coaches in Pennsylvania public schools. Participants, identified as co-researchers throughout this study, included 11 SWPBS coaches selected from seven elementary schools who are implementing the program with fidelity, as defined by Pennsylvania Positive Behavior Support Network (PAPBS, n.d.). The literature surrounding the SWPBS program is largely quantitative and does not include the coaches' experiences. Thus, this research filled an important gap in the literature on the crucial issue of providing positive behavior support that is facing schools across the United States today. The central question driving the study was: What are the coaches’ experiences during the school wide implementation year? Data was collected through individual face-to-face interviews, an online bulletin board focus group, and a document analysis comprised of letters written by each of the co-researcher coaches addressed to new or prospective SWPBS coaches giving them insight, advice, and information about this role.

Throughout the study I practiced epoche by recording my personal experiences and thoughts in a journal. Data analysis followed Moustakas’ (1994) approach to phenomenological research by defining preliminary groupings though horizontalization, identifying themes, constructing structural and textural descriptions, and finally, producing the essence of the experience. The information gleaned from this study illustrated to schools how this program influenced those leading it within the school.

Keywords: School Wide Positive Behavior Support, coaching, behavior management
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Dedication

This paper is dedicated to the one who put me through school. He is my greatest cheerleader, supporter, and partner in every endeavor, especially this paper. If I did not have my husband, Nelson, this would not be possible. Thank you, My Love.
Acknowledgments

I want to take a moment to acknowledge all of those who have taken time to encourage me, pray for me, and assist me in the process of completing my research. First and foremost, thank you Dr. Gail Collins for your support, feedback, and encouragement. Your ability to help me press on to the finish line was no small task. God truly sent me an outstanding chair that has forever impacted me.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge my amazing group of co-researchers sacrificing their time to complete my data collection process and share with me their experiences, without them this was not possible. Their stories, strategies, and new ideas were not only reflected in my findings, but also in my daily practice as a principal. Thank you for your participation.

Finally, I want to acknowledge my family, friends, and co-workers who offered endless words of encouragement, prayers for my success, and helped pick up some of my slack created by my desire to complete this project. Their ability to lift me up when I was discouraged, lend a helping hand when things seemed overwhelming, and overlooking the little things that may have slipped my mind, all spurred me on to completion. Each of these seemingly small moments impacted me greatly and is a part of my success. Thank you.
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List of Abbreviations

School Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS)
School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET)
Benchmarks of Quality (BOQ)
Response to Intervention and Instruction (RTII)
Pennsylvania Positive Behavior Support (PAPBS)
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
Positive Behavior Plans (PBS)
The School Wide Information System (SWIS)
Intermediate Unit (IU)
Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA)
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

This chapter outlines the background supporting the need to study the perceptions and experiences of School Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) coaches while they serve their colleagues as peer leaders during the first year of school wide implementation. School wide implementation occurs during the coaches’ second year in the position and begins after a year of planning and preparation (Richter, Lewis, & Hagar, 2011). Participants in the study were coaches from Pennsylvania schools who have implemented the program with fidelity as recognized by Pennsylvania Positive Behavior Support (PAPBS, n.d.). This chapter defines the position of SWPBS coach, fidelity, PAPBS, and the implementation process.

School Wide Positive Behavior Support coaches are critical supporters of the program, teachers, and administrators. This chapter introduces their importance and the lack of research focusing on this group. The SWPBS coaches have a unique experience and leadership role within the program. This study was designed to examine their lived experiences during implementation. The current research on teachers’ self-efficacy and perceptions of the program does not examine the specific experience of the coaches, although it amplifies the benefit of describing the coaches’ unique experiences (Fuerborn & Chinn, 2012). This chapter also presents my fascination with the topic and desire to complete the study, research questions, research plan, delimitations, and limitations of the study.

Background

Each school day children from a wide variety of backgrounds, abilities, experiences, and attitudes enter classrooms in order to learn. Children need an uninterrupted learning environment, and the SWPBS program creates the necessary consistency by being a clear,
succinct, and practical approach to behavior management. Therefore, SWPBS programs were developed from positive behavior plans used by educators working with students with a disability to help increase appropriate behavior through direct instruction and reinforcement of desired behavior (Caldarella, Shatzer, Gray, Young, & Young, 2011; Solomon, Klein, Hintze, Cressey, & Peller, 2012). Students identified with a variety of disabilities found success with this type of approach and that, in turn, led to the development of the framework and concepts being applied to plans for the general education population (Solomon et al., 2012). The combination of explicit instruction, tiered interventions, and follow through with positive reinforcement gives educators a framework for developing proper behavior in students of all ages and ability levels (Fallon, O’Keeffe, & Sugai, 2012; Richter et al., 2011).

The program is individualized and allows each school to create a specific plan to meet their needs, address their students’ specific behaviors, and develop age-appropriate interventions (Fallon et al., 2012). Adopting a SWPBS program begins with school leadership who believe in the philosophies that drive the program and are committed to supporting the program as both a manager and a leader (Richter et al., 2011). Once the adoption of the underlying philosophy of SWPBS occurs, the core team begins the planning process to meet the specific needs of the school’s population (Chitiyo, May, & Chitiyo, 2012; Fallon et al., 2012; PAPBS, n.d.). This planning process generally takes one school year and starts with choosing one or more coaches to lead the core team through the process (Chitiyo et al., 2012). To support the core team and coaching staff, a school may involve an external facilitator to train the team, assisting them with planning, and preparing them to train the staff at large (Chitiyo et al., 2012). The team is tasked with determining what behavioral expectations will be set, how expectations will be taught to students, what the reward system will look like, what the consequences will be, and how data
will be handled (Caldarella et al., 2011; Fallon, McCarthy, & Sanetti, 2014).

The data provided from discipline referrals, reward systems, and teachers allowed the school level team to assess the implementation of the program, areas of need, and what may need adapted to meet the current needs of the students (McIntosh, Filter, Bennett, Ryan & Sugai, 2009). The system is set up in three tiers, similar to Response to Intervention and Instruction (RTII), with tier one being a universal tier where all students receive instruction and reinforcement of behavior (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Caldarella et al., 2011; Fuerborn & Chinn, 2012). A student’s behavioral data determines their need for further interventions and subsequently their movement through the upper tiers of the program. Tiers two and three have interventions for students who cannot be successful in tier one and are not developed or implemented with fidelity officially until full implementation of tier one (Caldarella et al., 2011).

With the completion of the planning year, the staff and student body move into the implementation year, the first year the program is in place within the school (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011). This is the year following the planning and is the year students receive the specific behavior instruction, staff begins rewarding students, and data collection begins. The implementation year consists of utilizing the program with the general population; this is when every student receives the same instruction, interventions, rewards systems, and consequence systems (Bradshaw, & Pas, 2011; Fuerborn, & Chinn, 2012). Schools that begin with tier one, work within that universal tier for at least a year, if not two, before moving on to the following tiers that provide greater interventions for those not successful during tier one (Solomon et al., 2012). The core team does not train or prepare for further interventions until assessments are completed and show that they have implemented the program to fidelity (Caldarella et al., 2011; PAPBS, n.d.).
Curtis, Van Horne, Robertson, and Karvonen, (2010) demonstrated that SWPBS is an effective program by drastically reducing discipline referrals by upwards of 67% in a four-year implementation time span. More specifically, research indicated that instances of disrespect may be cut in half, for instance, profanity decreased by 40% in a three-year implementation (Ruiz, Ruiz & Sherman, 2012). The use of SWPBS also demonstrated a decrease in student discipline that removes students from the classroom, and as a result increased instructional time by as much as 50 days in a four-year period (Caldarella et al., 2011; McIntosh et al., 2009). Additionally, schools that implement the program properly show higher rates of teacher self-efficacy, compared to those in schools that are not using the program (Ross & Horner, 2007). There are many quantitative studies that share the impact of SWPBS programs; however, there is minimal literature examining the experiences of those working with the program, especially those in the coaching position.

Pennsylvania assesses program fidelity by PAPBS measured by research-based assessments, the School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET), and Benchmarks of Quality (BOQ) (Fallon et al., 2014; Kelm & McIntosh, 2011; PAPBS, n.d.). There is research that indicated that the level of fidelity, as measured by these assessments, influences the effectiveness of the program within the school (Fallon et al., 2014; Kelm & McIntosh, 2011). The goal of SWPBS is to decrease student office referrals, increase attendance, and increase student achievement through proactive management of expectations and behavior (Ross & Horner, 2007; Ruiz et al., 2012). Other indicators of program fidelity are in the commitment of the district administration, commitment of resources, increased positive school culture, and increased teacher self-efficacy (Fallon et al., 2012; Kelm & McIntosh, 2011; Lohrmann, Martin, & Patil, 2012).

Coaching implies a level of support, instruction, and cheerleading, and this is exactly
what SWPBS coaches do. When the planning year for SWPBS begins in a school, determining coaches and external facilitators to lead and support the process is an important step (Chitiyo et al., 2012; PAPBS, n.d.). The external facilitator is usually an outside support personnel that aids in proper training, preparation, and implementation of the program (Lohrmann et al., 2012; McIntosh et al., 2009). In Pennsylvania, the external facilitators are trained by PAPBS to support districts during the implementation and recognition processes (PAPBS, n.d.). SWPBS coaches are generally teachers, school counselors, or school psychologists who help lead the school level team through planning, implementation, and maintaining the program to ensure that tier one reaches all students and staff (McIntosh et al., 2009). Being a SWPBS coach is very much a peer leadership role as the coach will lead training, support staff, hold meetings, analyze data, report out to staff, and work closely with administration to make the program a success.

Administrators play a key role in SWPBS and make many decisions regarding its daily operation, continued success, and who the coach or coaches will be within the school (Kelm & McIntosh, 2011). It is imperative that an administrator and future coach understand the complexity, importance, and impact the new role a coach plays in a program, school, and staff relationships within a school. Entering into a coaching position is a decision that requires thought and serious consideration. Due to the lack of literature, specifically focusing on SWPBS coaches overall experience, perception, and impact implementation had on them as an educator, their experience, perceptions, and role in implementing this program is largely unknown. Information regarding these experiences can only give more information to drive decisions related to new coaches.

A SWPBS coach’s ability to take on a leadership role, change their level of interaction with peers, and commitment to a program that is designed to manage and support positive
behavior all work under Bandura’s (2001) Social Cognitive Theory and Kouzes and Posner’s (2007) Leadership Theories. Bandura discussed that humans work their way to success through decisions, awareness of their own abilities, and navigation through social situations. There is a purposefulness and desire to predict and control outcomes of decisions within this theory (Bandura, 2001). This creates a unique social system and the power created by a shared purpose, collection of skills, and knowledge of members can make a great impact when working toward a common goal (Bandura, 2001). One of the key roles of a SWPBS coach is to lead and manage the core team in efforts to maintain and move the program forward within the school (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Lohrmann et al., 2012). Kouzes and Posner defined the principles of leaders as practices and behaviors, rather than personality or internal traits. Coaches, as peer leaders, face a very specific set of challenges and therefore need a specific set of leadership practices to be successful.

Skinner’s (1961) Behaviorism and the concept of controlling human behavior also relates to this study. Coaches work directly with students in tier one of SWPBS to teach expectations, reward positive behavior, and apply interventions or consequences when needed, as well as working with staff to ensure they are doing the same (Richter et al., 2011). Skinner stated that managing others’ behaviors happens through positive reinforcement, motivational control, and knowledge of individuals. These are techniques, when combined with their ability to lead, allow coaches to be successful in their position.

**Situation to Self**

As an elementary school principal who leads a school that uses SWPBS, and the human instrument (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) for this qualitative research study, I have experience with behavior management, faculty leadership positions, and the program itself. Working in my
fourth year as a school level administrator, I have worked in schools with and without SWPBS. I prefer to work in schools that have the program implemented with fidelity as I have seen the success it can bring. The effectiveness of the coach assisting in the implementation of the program is a large factor in program success. Reflecting on the importance of their role motivates me to examine the coaches’ experiences and raises questions about what they experienced when implementing the program. I have worked with students and faculty in grades kindergarten through 12th and have experienced behavior management at all levels. My bias is the belief that the program is worth the effort and will be helpful at all levels. When examining research, I concluded that the program is critical for any school to have a positive culture, maintain order, and increase morale (Caldarella et al., 2011; Chitiyo et al., 2012; Fallon et al., 2012; Kelm & McIntosh, 2011).

Creswell (2013) discussed ontological assumptions as the nature of reality and the influence perspective has on reality. Knowledge is what is conscious and subjective based on each person’s experiences (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). The experiences SWPBS coaches had during implementation are valued and explored throughout this study. Their experiences and perceptions will show the reality.

The relationship between the researcher and the study is referred to as epistemological assumptions (Creswell, 2013). Moustakas (1994) discussed that human science research must search for meaning and essences by looking at the entire experience and not just segments of the data. As the researcher, the more interaction I had with the participants the more exposure to the entire experience I gained. In order to maintain the integrity of the participants’ experiences, I began by systematically setting aside my own predetermined thoughts about the study and the participants through a process referred to as epoche (Moustakas, 1994). This began before data
collection and continued throughout the remainder of the study. I utilized journaling to
formalize and record my effort to set my personal dispositions aside (see Appendix E for Epoche
Journaling). The co-researchers’ experiences and perceptions were of the utmost importance,
and it was critical that I, as the human research instrument, processed what they had to say with
an open mind, free of as much bias as possible (Moustakas, 1994). My role was a non-
participant who spent time in the field to obtain the rich descriptions of the experience. The field
in this study was seven Pennsylvania public schools, where I was not a supervisor, and 11
SWPBS coaches in schools that are implementing the program with fidelity, as recognized by the
PAPBS and had that role during the first year of full implementation.

The rhetorical assumptions were the proper use of participants’ narratives and vocabulary
throughout the report (Creswell, 2013). This study gave the reader an in-depth understanding of
the experience a SWPBS Coach has during the implementation of the program. I utilized social
constructivism theories and qualitative research methods when designing the study, which
facilitated the process of gathering and analyzing participants’ experiences with the goal of
describing the essence of being a SWPBS Coach. Their experiences and perspectives created the
essence or the experience, or the reality. The term co-researcher replaced the term participants
when talking about the coaches throughout the study, because as a social researcher I needed to
have the fullest cooperation and deeper interpersonal interactions with the participants (Fraelich,
1989). Fraelich (1989) explained that co-researchers are encouraged to become involved,
elevated to a partner in the research, increasing the validity of the study. Throughout the study, I
used the narratives of the co-researchers to articulate the essence of the phenomenon.

An axiological assumption is one with recognition that the study has value (Creswell,
2013). Social events create reality and are subject to those interacting with the situation, it is
critical that those experiencing the phenomenon at such a high level would have their experiences heard. My career included work in elementary through high school public schools in Pennsylvania. I am currently an administrator and have been for the past four years. Before entering administration, I was a secondary math teacher for five years in a variety of school settings. Whether I have been a teacher or administrator, I have been required to work with peer leaders and student behavior management on a daily basis.

**Problem Statement**

School Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) is a systematic behavior management approach that was modeled after Positive Behavior Plans developed for students with disabilities (Solomon et al., 2012) and has yielded success in decreasing student office referrals, increasing positive school climate, and reducing truancy (Caldrella et al., 2011; Ruiz et al., 2012). SWPBS coaches are critical to the success of the program by leading their school's core team, conducting training in relation to the program, completing data analysis, assisting with infrastructure maintenance, and ensuring proper program implementation (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Lohrmann et al., 2012). Coaches for the program step into a peer leadership position and have a unique experience throughout the program, especially implementation (Lohrmann et al., 2012). Much of the completed research to date occurred at the elementary level and focused on teacher perception and student outcomes; however, research has not addressed the coaches’ experiences (Caldrella et al., 2011; Solomon et al., 2012). As peer leaders driving this program in many schools, the examination of coaches’ perspectives is of great value to administration and future coaches.
Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to describe the essence of SWPBS coaches’ experiences as educators, peer leaders within their school during implementation of SWPBS in Pennsylvania public schools. At this stage in the research, the definition of implementation is the first year of SWPBS program implementation with all faculty, staff, and students, after the initial year of planning. The SWPBS coach has a critical leadership role throughout the implementation process, which creates valuable experience related to leadership, social interaction, and the use of the SWPBS program. The theories guiding this study are Bandura’s (2001) social cognitive theory as it relates to navigating the social labyrinth created when a new stimuli is introduced to an established environment, and Kouzes and Posner (2007) leadership principles that describe actions of successful leaders.

Significance of the Study

SWPBS has been found to decrease student discipline referrals, increase student attendance, and improve the overall culture and environment of the elementary, middle, and high school buildings (Caldarella et al., 2011; Chitiyo et al., 2012; Fallon et al., 2012; Kelm & McIntosh, 2011). However, the implementation of any new initiative or program in an existing school climate can be a difficult transition for all involved (Chapparo et al. 2012). SWPBS is no exception. Those appointed to leadership positions from within the organization are key to the success of the program and its implementation to fidelity. There is a correlation between the level of fidelity a program is implemented at, as measured by the SET and BOQ, and its level of effectiveness (Kelm & McIntosh, 2011). There are two types of support recommended to assist in the implementation of the program framework, they are coaches and external facilitators (PAPBS, n.d.). This study focused on the coaches and their experience in their assumed
leadership position during implementation of the SWPBS program within the school they work. This experience description added to the overall understanding of the inner workings, complex social situations, and implementation process of the program.

Administrators and leaders of the program face several barriers when trying to implement SWPBS properly. One of the largest barriers is teacher buy-in and willingness to use the program properly (Fallon et al., 2014; Fuerborn & Chin, 2012; Lohrmann et al., 2012). Coaches bridge the gap between administrators and the teaching team as a whole. They facilitate and lead the SWPBS leadership team through meetings, by sustaining the program through data analysis, and maintaining the program’s integrity within the school through monitoring and supporting teachers throughout the process (McIntosh et al., 2009). The decision of who to put in such a role should not be taken lightly and should require research, a complete understanding of what a new coach will experience, and a commitment to the proper implementation and support of the program. This study gave future coaches and administrators a resource when seeking to understand the personal experience, needed skills, dispositions, and knowledge of a coach’s role to inform them about what a person will need to be able to handle to be a successful.

The experience of SWPBS coaches is added to the body of research related to the program, enriching the understanding of its impact on the student body and school faculty. Allowing these peer leaders to share their constructed reality and, through conversation, reveal their perceptions of their leadership, implementation of the program, and the impact the process has had on them as a professional, provided the essence of their lived experience. The information provided allows for further qualitative research and could yield additional studies related to SWPBS, leadership, or behavior management. Moustakas (1994) stated that one
cannot fully construct reality from simply a personal perspective, but must also add the social component.

**Research Questions**

Examining SWPBS coaches’ experiences adds to the ongoing discussion of SWPBS by focusing on the roles of SWPBS coaches as peer leaders, and as a result, leadership becomes a strong theme throughout this study. Kouzes and Posner (2007) discussed many actions of leaders and emphasized that it is their actions or skills, rather than their personality that lead to success in a particular leadership role. Bandura (2001) outlined how people make decisions about behavior based on their perceived outcomes. This relates directly to the SWPBS program through the management of student behavior and the choices of the coaches as they interact socially in their leadership role. Finally, Skinner’s (1961) discussion of controlling behavior addresses outside stimuli in the context of the SWPBS program and how it operates.

The central question of this study sought to explore the lived experiences of SWPBS coaches during the implementation year of the program:

What are the lived experiences of SWPBS coaches, as peer leaders, during the school wide implementation year?

McIntosh, Filter, Bennett, Ryan, and Sugai (2009) shared, “Coaches are essential to effectiveness, because a coach can help to troubleshoot problems with implementation that might affect SWPBS effectiveness” (p. 16). Coaches are responsible for maintaining enthusiasm for the program, make decisions, and provide technical assistance for the faculty they are serving (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011). Each district will model their specific coaching responsibilities differently, depending on their own infrastructure; however, coaches, in general, support and ensure that all stakeholders have what they need to implement the program properly (Chapparo
et al., 2012). Research indicates that the SWPBS coach is a critical component of the program (McIntosh & Bennett, 2011), but there is an underrepresentation of their experiences in that same research.

Cowley (1928) stated, “A leader is an individual who is moving in a particular direction and who succeeds in inducing others to follow after him” (p. 145). Kouzes and Posner (2007) shared that leaders cannot command that others follow, only inspire it. Being a leader implies not only movement and growth, but also the ability to inspire others to follow suit. This happens through the behavior of modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act and encouraging the heart (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Each coach will carry out these leadership principles in different ways; however, they are key to the success of the leader and in turn the program. SWPBS coaches are thrust into leadership of their peers and are tasked with keeping a program running with fidelity, analyzing data, supporting those utilizing the program and making decisions regarding the program (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011). The experiences of individuals provide powerful explanations and are the only way to produce the essences of phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The representation of the SWPBS coaches' voices must occur through their narratives.

The research questions to support the central question are as follows:

1. What changes to the social system have occurred within the school related to the SWPBS coach’s interactions with colleagues as peer leaders?

Some of the coaches’ responsibilities include assisting teachers with strategies, managing student behavior, and properly implementing the program (Reinke, Herman, & Stormont, 2013). Bandura (2001) explained that people produce social systems just as much as they are a product
of them. Coaches help produce the social system created through the implementation of SWPBS and their experiences of leading their peers adds to the essence of the phenomenon.

2. How does the implementation of the program impact SWPBS coaches’ management of student behavior and their role as an educator?

Skinner (1975) discussed behavior management and how positive reinforcement, a key component in SWPBS, can change someone’s behavior. Behavior management, a key task for educators, is the essence of SWPBS and can have a great impact on a professional. Since coaches are still professionals within a school, they are interacting with faculty and students daily. The impact of how the program affects the coaches own management approach is a powerful perspective to include.

3. What do SWPBS coaches’ view as barriers to successful, sustainable implementation of the SWPBS program, and how were they able to overcome those barriers to achieve implementation with fidelity?

Barriers need to be addressed during implementation in order to reach implementation with fidelity. The BOQ requires teachers that are using the program to identify the barriers within their particular setting (Fallon et al., 2014). The level and amount of barriers within a particular setting varies and can come from a multitude of sources. Researchers found that the common barriers to full implementation of a SWPBS program included teacher buy-in, administrative support, consistent implementation, and resources committed to the program (Fallon et al., 2014; Flannery, Sugai, & Anderson, 2009; Fuerborn & Chinn, 2012; Lohrmann et al., 2012). The concern about barriers to implementation rose to the level where some states committed resources to help school district overcome the barriers and implement the program with fidelity (McIntosh et al., 2009; Ruiz et al., 2012). Coaches play a critical role when it is
time to combat barriers and have a unique role in ensuring the school is implementing the program with fidelity, despite the barriers.

4. What role does the SWPBS program play in enhancing the school culture related to students, staff and overall approach to student behavior management?

One of the greatest strengths of the SWPBS program is the framework approach it employs by creating a flexible outline that each implementation site can adapt to fit their current culture (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011). Culture is not an easy concept to define in many cases and is largely undervalued as a critical component of a learning environment (Fallon et al., 2012). Schein (1992) defined culture as a set of unwritten rules that people adhere to when trying to join a certain group. The faculty and staff enhance the current culture by taking a proactive approach to behavior management and making a greater effort to meet the student body’s needs (McIntosh et al., 2009). Many studies stated that SWPBS has created a better culture and improves student discipline, achievement and attendance data within the school setting by building a positive environment (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Caldarella et al., 2011; Chitiyo et al., 2012; Fallon et al., 2012; Fallon et al., 2014; Kelm & McIntosh, 2011; Lynass, Tsai, Richman, & Cheney, 2012; Ruiz et al., 2012).

**Research Plan**

This transcendental, phenomenological qualitative research study explored the essence of SWPBS coaches’ experiences with implementing the program within their school. The choice of transcendental phenomenological method was rooted in the need to have a greater understanding of coaches’ experiences. This type of research gleaned rich descriptions and a level of detail and was the rational for selecting this design. Before data collection, I systematically set aside my own predetermined thoughts related to SWPBS and its full implementation in a public school
through a process referred to as *epoche* (Moustakas, 1994). This occurred through journaling and purposefully setting aside my own experiences and opinions of SWPBS (see Appendix E for Epoche Journaling). Moustakas (1994) shared that the importance of this is rooted in the fact that all human researchers have the potential for bias that will impact the research process. I reminded myself of this as I continued to journal through the data collection and analysis process to assist in setting aside my opinions, remembering I have never been a SWPBS coach, and that the co-researchers have an experience I would like to examine.

Moustakas (1994) discussed the importance of data collection through interviews. In light of the importance that interviews play in a phenomenological study, the data for this study began with face-to-face individual interviews. The other two data collection tools included a digital bulletin board focus group and document analysis. Following the interviews, due to geographical limitations, co-researchers were asked to participate in a bulletin board focus group, formatted as an online discussion board, and designed to allow multiple interactions around the topic of being a SWPBS coach during implementation. Finally, each coach was asked to create a letter to a new or prospective coach giving them advice and perspective on the position.

An organized, consistent method of collecting data occurred throughout the study. Moustakas (1994) recommended that data analysis should begin with *epoche*, move to phenomenological reduction, then continue to imaginative variation, and finally a synthesis of meaning, where the essence will be determined. As co-researchers, the participants will be encouraged to focus on their role as a SWPBS coach during the implementation year.

**Delimitations**

The study focused on elementary SWPBS coaches to take a closer look at this important role within a program implemented with fidelity. Coaches take on critical peer leadership roles
and in order to understand the essence of their experience in this role, a phenomenological study is the best choice (Moustakas, 1994). These individuals decide to take on added responsibility, leadership responsibilities, and often do not receive compensation for their efforts. There was a need to understand and hear their experiences and perceptions of the program and implementation process. This study adds to the body of literature about the program and explores its impact on school personnel in the peer leadership role.

Definitions

1. *School Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS)*: A program that is school-wide interventions that include outlined expectations, explicit teaching, positive reinforcement, defined consequences and data analysis (Caldarella et al., 2011)

2. *SWPBS coach*: A person designated to support the implementation and maintenance of the program (Lohrmann et al., 2012).

3. *Fidelity*: Implementing the SWPBS and receiving a passing score on the research based SET or BOQ (Fallon et al., 2014; Kelm & McIntosh, 2011).

Summary

This chapter outlined the study and discussed what SWPBS is, how coaches work within the program, and the design of this study. The background portion of the chapter sets the stage for the study by explaining the program and the basic role of a SWPBS coach. I discuss my situation as the researcher and motivations for completing this study. Using current research and theoretical lenses, five research questions lay the foundation of the study. The purpose of this study was to understand the essence of the experience of SWPBS coaches as they navigate through the year of implementation within their school. There is a lack of research exploring this phenomenon and their voices are largely underrepresented in literature. Research focusing on
SWPBS is largely quantitative and does not explore the peer leadership aspect that coaching brings to the program.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Behavior management, control of a classroom, positive school culture, school improvement, and building an environment that students desire to come to and learn in do not happen by chance. Many schools have chosen to abandon traditional, punitive measures to control student behavior and have turned to a positive, proactive approach. SWPBS takes that positive, proactive approach to student behavior and wraps it in a program that each school can adapt and plan through to make their own (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Caldarella et al., 2011 Landers, Coutade, & Ryndak, 2012; McIntosh & Bennett, 2011). Misbehavior can disrupt a learning environment and impact student achievement, perception of safety, and the overall culture of a school (Caldarella et al., 2011 Fallon et al., 2014; Horner et al., 2009; Kelm & McIntosh, 2011; McIntosh & Bennett, 2011; Ruiz et al., 2012). The need to have control of students and their behaviors is a key and critical part of an educator’s job and often seen as a burden (Hoy & Miskel, 2008; Reinke et al., 2013).

Theoretical Framework

The three theories that guide this study are Skinner’s (1961) operant conditioning theory, Bandura’s (2001) social cognitive theory and Kouzes and Posner’s (2007) leadership principles. The foundation of SWPBS is rooted in, Skinner’s operant conditioning theories, Bandura’s social cognitive theory and those who lead the program should be adhering to Kouzes and Posner’s leadership principles. Skinner outlined how humans are influenced by outside stimuli and conditioning, while Bandura discussed how external, environmental factors influence behaviors. SWPBS support helps address the need for educators to create a safe, positive learning environment for students of all ages (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Chitiyo et al., 2012; Fallon
et al., 2014). Kouzes and Posner’s five principles of leadership distinctions are applicable to the SWPBS coaches that lead their colleagues through the implementation and maintenance of the program.

**Operant Conditioning Theory**

SWPBS is rooted in Skinner’s (1961) operant conditioning theory where behavior is influenced by outside motivators. This is largely illustrated in SWPBS implementation through the use of rewards and the idea that students will abide by their teachers’ expectations if they know they will be rewarded. Skinner believed that people could be controlled in several ways through outside stimuli. He built his theory of operant conditioning upon Pavlov’s theories pertaining to controlling behavior by conditioning an organism to respond through reinforcement. In another publication Skinner (1975) discussed an organism’s behavior in conjunction with its environment. SWPBS not only develops behaviors in students through outside stimuli, it also influences them through the environment it creates.

**Social Cognitive Theory**

In addition to behaviorism, Bandura’s (2001) social cognitive theory explains a large portion of what SWPBS accomplishes. Bandura emphasized that humans make decisions about their behavior based on their belief about themselves and the perceived outcome of the behavior. SWPBS creates a consistent set of outcomes for behavior of students; it allows them to make decisions and anticipate the outcome of each decision. Bandura also discussed the concept of self-efficacy as an influence on human behavior. Promoting positive reinforcement and success among students through proper implementation of SWPBS can increase students’ self-efficacy and hopefully increase good behavioral choices. Finally, Bandura discussed that humans learn how to behave through watching others model the behavior. This is displayed in
SWPBS when teachers give students direct instruction on the behavioral expectations. Behavior modeling is also present when the SWPBS coach and core team of peer leaders models the program procedures and processes for their fellow staff members.

**Leadership Theory**

Finally, the need for leadership and a guiding force behind SWPBS is evident. Kouzes and Posner (2007) outline five principles of effective leadership. The five principals are: (a) model the way, (b) inspire a shared vision, (c) challenge the process, (d) enable others to act, and (e) encourage the heart (p. 26). These are common practices that have been studied in thousands of successful leaders in a wide range and variety of leadership positions (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Kouzes and Posner claimed that leadership is not about personality, but rather about behavior. Behavior can determine success, especially within a leader. The program model places coaches in the primary leadership position. Stepping into a peer leadership role to guide faculty through a shift in behavior management is a very specific situation that calls for unique character, behavior, and leadership traits.

**Summary of Theoretical Framework**

SWPBS system is grounded in Skinner’s (1961) operant conditioning theory and relies on Bandura’s (2001) social cognitive theory that allows for leadership to be brought forth to successfully conduct one’s self within Kouzes and Posner’s (2007) five leadership distinctives. Operant conditioning is directly applied during program implementation when the team develops and uses a consistent, purposful reward system to change student behavior. Social cognitive theory impacts the navigation among the staff and students when the new social paradigm is formed as a result of the implementation of the program. Finally, when a SWPBS coach steps
into the leadership position, they will need to employ the five principles of leadership to be successful in moving the team and faculty forward with implementation.

**Related Literature**

This section outlines literature pertaining to the procedures related to kindergarten through 12\textsuperscript{th} grade implementation of SWPBS, its use in schools across the United States, and stakeholders involved with the program. Literature pertaining to the framework of SWPBS, state support of the program, the results from using the program, the origins from special education plans, school culture, program management, and the coaching model will also be reviewed. This multidimensional program allows for multiple avenues for discussion, research, and experiences. Coaches who serve within a school using SWPBS also must work to facilitate the coordination of many variables related to operation, the stakeholders’ involvement, and other influences on the program to reach implementation with fidelity. Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion on how this study adds to the current body of research on this topic.

**School Wide Positive Behavior Support Program**

**Overview.** SWPBS is a program that is implemented with a general school population as a way to proactively encourage good behavior and create interventions for students who struggle to meet expectations (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Caldarella et al., 2011; Landers et al., 2012). The basic structure of the program is a three-tiered design, where the expectation is that most students will be successful in tier one, the universal tier (Caldarella et al., 2011). The estimate is that 80% of students will be successful in the universal tier and will not need to move into subsequent intervention tiers (Caldarella et al., 2011; Chapparo et al., 2012). The first tier includes explicit instruction of behavioral expectations, positively reinforcing the meeting of those expectations, defined consequences for misbehavior, and data driven decision-making by SWPBS leadership
to ensure success (Chapparo et al., 2012; Landers et al., 2012). The hope is that all students are successful in tier one, but, in general, a small percentage is not, requiring teams to develop and implement tier two and three interventions.

Since the universal tier provides the foundation for the program, it is critical for it to be implemented with fidelity before a SWPBS core team moves into development of tier two and three interventions (Landers et al., 2012). When schools finally do move into development and implementation of the subsequent tiers they begin to focus on individual or small group needs, interventions, and progress (Landers et al., 2012). Approximately 20% of the students need interventions designed in the tier two and three levels with hopefully only approximately 5% reaching tier three (Caldarella et al., 2011). This mimics the response to intervention and instruction (RTII) models that many schools employ to assess and assist students academically (Bradshaw, & Pas, 2011; Fallon et al., 2012; Horner et al., 2009). Students move through the tiers of support when the data surrounding their ability to meet expectation after receiving tier one instruction and reinforcement shows a need for greater intervention (Fallon et al., 2012).

When students are not successful during the universal tier they move into tier two interventions, which includes further instruction and behavioral interventions designed to create positive outcomes for those who have been unsuccessful (Chapparo et al., 2012; Fallon et al., 2014). Tier two is a focused effort on one student to assist them in meeting expectation so they can be moved back into the universal tier (Fallon et al., 2012). Tier two may include consistent monitoring of the student, small group interventions, prompting and instruction related to appropriate behavior and positive reinforcement (Fallon et al., 2012; Freeman et al., 2015). The goal is to assist students by instructing them on how to replace their behavior choices with ones that meet expectations and allows them to be successful (McIntosh et al., 2009). Horner et al.
(2009) stated, “Secondary tier behavior supports are designed for students ‘at risk’ for problem behaviors, who benefit from low-intensity interventions that can be administered with high efficiency” (p. 134). One strategy used at this level is the check-in and checkout procedure that gives the student a mentor that allows them to review goals and progress on a regular basis (McIntosh et al., 2009). Students in tier two can move back to the universal tier or if they are not successful in tier two they will move to tier three.

Tier three requires individual assessment of needs, use of data to develop targeted efforts, and at times individual plans of support (Chapparo et al., 2012; Fallon et al., 2014). In many cases, students who are classified as tier three are those with disabilities who will need individualized, intense behavior support that may or may not fall into the realm of special education (Landers et al., 2012). This support may be included as part of the students Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or the interventions may be implemented for the student under the umbrella of SWPBS (Landers et al., 2012). These interventions may include functional behavior assessments, social skills instruction, intense individual behavior monitoring, and mental health services (Fallon et al., 2012). Each child is an individual and the team must decide what level of intervention will meet that student’s needs. The number of students needing tier two and three support decreased after more than a year of successful implementation of all three tiers (Fallon et al., 2014).

**Implementation process.** The implementation process begins with a yearlong time of planning and preparation before the general population begins using the program (Chaparro, Smolkowski, Baker, Hanson, & Ryan-Jackson, 2012). The process begins with the SWPBS coach, administration, and core team coming together, reviewing the framework, enlisting the assistance of an external facilitator, then aligning the framework with their culture and district
mission (Chaparro et al., 2012). Using supporting documents like the SWPBS blueprint helps keep the core team focused and ensures they have considered potential barriers, developed all components and are prepared to use the program with the general population (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Lynass et al., 2012; McIntosh & Bennett, 2011; U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2010; Sugai, O’Keeffe, & Fallon, 2012). In some areas external facilitators will not begin working with a core team until the administrators commits to the project with both with resources and leadership (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; PAPBS, n.d.). The process should be driven by school level data to determine what specific challenges that school’s population has in order to match it with the most useful strategies for support (Fuerborn & Chinn, 2012). Faculty and staff involvement is encouraged as often as possible, during the planning process. Discussions, surveys, individual conversations, and decision-making meetings can increase that involvement (Lohrmann et al., 2012). The goal is to create the school level SWPBS plan, prepare expectations, behavior matrix, consequence system, rewards program, and train teachers on the entire program (Caldarella et al., 2011). The initial planning year begins with designing the universal tier and establishes the basic procedures for program implementation (Landers et al, 2012).

When core teams prepare their expectations, it is recommended that they keep it to three to five expectations that can be defined in more detail at each classroom and non-classroom location throughout the school (Curtis, Van Horne, Robertson, & Karvonen, 2010; Horner et al., 2009; Lynass et al., 2012). These expectations should be framed positively, clearly defined, and reflect the community values and culture of the school (Fallon et al., 2012; Horner et al., 2009; Lynass et al., 2012; McIntosh & Bennett, 2011). Adults being asked to instruct and reinforce the expectations need to be trained to understand what following the expectation looks like, how to
appropriately reinforce proper behavior, and address those not following expectations (Fallon et al., 2012; Horner et al., 2009). The creation of a behavior matrix, which details behavioral indicators of each broad expectation, enhances consistency throughout the implementation of the program (Lynass et al., 2012; Matthews, McIntosh, Frank, & May, 2014). The goal is to have a predictable environment where students are very aware of expectations, how to meet them and what will happen after they make a choice to follow them or not (Fallon et al., 2012; Horner et al., 2009). Expectations will vary from district to district and school to school, as well as levels of education. The broad expectations that are defined at specific locations will often include ideals, such as respect or responsibility, but at the high school level, more complex concepts are added, such as achievement and school spirit (Flannery et al., 2009; Lynass et al., 2012).

After the core team has created and trained the faculty and staff on consistent reinforcement and consequences to behavioral choices, the school enters the implementation year by kicking off the program with the entire study body (Lohrmann et al., 2012). The collection of data and its use to drive the decision making process should begin as soon as the program is implemented. This data analysis and subsequent adjustments to the program should begin working in preparation for the administration of the SET and BOQ assessments (Fallon et al., 2012; Freeman et al., 2015; Horner et al., 2004). These research-based assessments examine the implementation fidelity of the program’s universal tier (Horner et al., 2004). It is critical that the universal tier be implemented with fidelity before a core team moves into planning interventions tiers. This is because it is imperative to ensure that each student has received proper instruction and reinforcement of expectations before interventions should occur (Landers et al., 2012).

The SET is assessed using seven key components of the SWPBS program and its implementation with in an environment by examining documents and interviewing stakeholders
in the program (Fallon et al., 2012; Gage, Sugai, Lewis, & Brzozowy, 2015; Horner et al., 2004). The SET was assessment developed out of research identifying successful practices as measured by positive student outcomes during implementation of the universal tier (Horner et al., 2004). A trained, outside observer to a school’s implementation must give the SET, while the administration of the BOQ is an internal assessment give to measure implementation with fidelity (Fallon et al., 2012). The core team completes the BOQ, which addresses seven areas of implementation, giving the team additional data to drive the program (Fallon et al., 2012; Kelm & McIntosh, 2011). The BOQ is an informal assessment of implementation, while the SET is a much more formal process, but both are recognized as indicators of implementation fidelity (Fallon et al., 2012; Kelm & McIntosh, 2011; PAPBS, n.d). Generally, fidelity is reached on either assessment when a school’s score reaches a level 80% or higher (Lohrmann et al., 2012).

**Barriers to implementation.** The SET and BOQ assessments that look at the level of implementation a school has reached examine specific areas of the framework and determine if almost all of the faculty and staff are implementing them properly (PAPBS, n.d). These assessments occur during the implementation of tier one during which there are several factors within a school that can hinder the implementation. Administrators, as leaders, have great influence over how and what their faculty and staff do throughout a school year. If an administrator is not supportive of the program, it is the largest barrier for the SWPBS coach and team to overcome to have implementation with fidelity (Lohrmann et al., 2012). Ideally, school-level principals are active participants and have input in decision made regarding SWPBS implementation (Chapparo et al., 2012; Lohrmann et al., 2012). Lohrmann, Martin, and Patil (2012) illustrated that coaches often struggled with administrators that did not agree with the SWPBS philosophy or administrators that were appointed to the committee as part of assistant
principal role, feeling as though large school-wide decisions were not within their power. Principals should be a part of the process and reward system, and actively modeling the components of the framework (Lohrmann et al., 2012). When this does not happen, it is difficult for the program to be successful. Richter, Lewis, and Hagar (2013) claimed that some principals might need support and training to gain an in-depth understanding of how the program works to increase their support.

In order for SWPBS to be successful in any public learning environment, the program needs to have at least 80% of the faculty and staff bought into the concept (Flannery et al., 2009; Fuerborn & Chinn, 2012; Lohrmann et al., 2012; McIntosh et al., 2009). Buy-in refers to accepting the preventive, positive approach to behavior management and attempting to consistently implement it to the best of their ability (Flannery et al., 2009). Implementation of the program’s initial assessment occurs at the universal tier; it is critical to have teacher buy-in and when it is not there, it becomes a significant barrier to implementation with fidelity (Lohrmann et al., 2012). At times there is a lack of understanding among teachers about the philosophies of SWPBS, the need for it, or the skepticism of its effectiveness on student behavior (Fuerborn & Chinn, 2012; Flannery et al., 2009). There are teachers who have also brought attitudes and opinions that social, behavioral, and emotional instruction and reinforcement are not a part of their job description, or that students should not be rewarded for meeting expectations (Flannery et al., 2009; Fuerborn & Chinn, 2012). Fuerborn and Chinn (2012) also cited consistent practices with program and difficulties collaborating through issues with the program as reasons for barriers related to teacher and staff participation. Teachers' lack of support may stem from minimum professional development regarding the program and limited time to support and implement all required initiatives (Flannery et al., 2009). Bradshaw and Pas
(2011) claimed that the more preparation and training the teachers receive, the higher the level of implementation fidelity. Teachers who are not supportive can go as far as refusing to complete tasks associated with the framework, such as explicit teaching of expectation to students (Lohrmann et al., 2012).

Data analysis and decisions made based on that analysis are keys to the continued success of SWPBS. The first layer to the barrier is the actual collection of the data, can be inconsistent for various reasons, from the differing definitions of behavioral infractions to procedural flaws (Flannery et al., 2009). Even if there is accurate, consistent data, many SWPBS coaches and teams lack the skills and training to use data appropriately to make informed decisions (Flannery et al., 2009). If a team was not able to do this or did not have a single member skilled at data-driven decision-making, they often fall short or fail in this area, creating a difficult barrier to overcome (Flannery et al., 2009). In some program sites the simple collection of data is a barrier for the team and allows this to be an area where they do not succeed in the fidelity assessments (Freeman et al., 2015). Professional development, external facilitators, and putting systems in place to make data driven decisions can all help coaches and teams overcome this barrier.

Barriers in any particular school may include lack of administrative support, teacher-buy-in, or data analysis systems; however, as unique as each team’s implementation of the framework, the barriers facing each school will be different (Fallon et al., 2014). It is critical for the core team to determine what barriers are or are going to be unique to their setting, and work purposefully and systematically to address them in a way that is culturally appropriate to their population (Fallon et al., 2014; Fuerborn et al., 2012; Lohrmann et al., 2012). The BOQ and SET also assist in identifying barriers unique to the particular build’s population and can aid in focusing systematic improvement (Fallon et al., 2014). It falls to the coach and core team to
work collaboratively with the faculty and staff to improve the barriers and move forward with implementation with fidelity (Lohrmann et al., 2012). During implementation, it is critical that this team also work to sustain the program while addressing the barriers (Matthews et al., 2014).

**SWPBS across grade levels.** This study focused on the coaches’ experience during implementation of SWPBS at public schools that instruct in kindergarten through sixth grade; however, preschool and secondary environments have seen the framework be successful as well (Solomon et al., 2012). Elementary schools are more likely to have SWPBS in place with notable growth in the middle and high schools (Flannery et al., 2009). There are district teams who have chosen to implement SWPBS at every school or program within the district and many have created systems to allocate resources, train staff, empower leadership, encourage consistency, and facilitate collaboration (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; McIntosh & Bennett, 2011). Although implementation and procedures may look very different across grade levels, the overall basic components and outcomes are consistent (Horner et al., 2009).

Elementary schools make up the highest percentage of schools implementing SWPBS with fidelity (Flannery et al., 2009). As a result of the high implementation numbers, many of the studies completed have been done in elementary environments and have been used to drive the growth of the program (Bradshaw, Koth, Bevans, Ialongo, & Leaf, 2008; Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Curtis et al., 2010; Horner et al., 2009; Reinke et al., 2013). Many of the components, explicit instruction of expectations, rewards, interventions, and consequences, of SWPBS require direct interaction with the students and need to be age appropriate (Fallon et al., 2014). Literacy scores, one of the largest instructional goals in an elementary school, improve when SWPBS is in place with fidelity (Horner et al., 2009). Elementary schools build the foundation for a
district-wide program scale-up and give students their first experience with expectations, the program, and school in general, making it a critical time to introduce SWPBS.

Middle schools are transitional years between elementary and high school levels, as well as childhood and adolescence. Information pertaining to middle school discipline outlines statistics, such as almost half of all African American males are suspended in middle school and consequences for behavior becoming more severe and more often exclusionary (Fallon et al., 2012). Discipline becomes more complicated and reasons for referrals range, but the majority falls into noncompliance and insubordination (Fallon et al., 20012 Ruiz et al., 2012). In districts with kindergarten through 12th grade models, effective implementation at the middle level directly influences the success of the implementation at the high school (Freeman et al., 2015). This is when students become more difficult to stay interested, and reward systems at the very least, need to begin to incorporate their input (Flannery et al., 2009).

Schools at the high school level, as research and implementation increases, where the student body has experienced SWPBS at the elementary and middle levels, have seen more successful implementation (Flannery et al., 2009). At this level, due to systems that are more complex, the implementation, leadership team, and processes may look very different from the middle or elementary levels (Flannery et al., 2009). Just as in middle school, discipline is more complicated and often uses exclusionary measures at the high school level, having a negative impact on achievement and little impact on the behavior itself (Chitiyo et al., 2012; Fallon et al., 2012; McIntosh & Bennett, 2011). Exclusionary discipline practices increase a student’s likelihood of repeating the infraction, dropping out, or withdrawing socially (McIntosh et al., 2009). While SWPBS does not remove exclusionary discipline practices, it has shown the ability to help reduce them (Solomon et al., 2012).
**Sustainability.** “Sustainability is the durable, long-term implementation of a practice at a level of fidelity that continues to produce valued outcomes” (McIntosh et al., 2009, p. 10) Sustainability is important for schools using SWPBS because it take several years to fully implement the entire framework and reach complete implementation with fidelity (Chitiyo et al., 2012). Bradshaw and Pas (2011) discussed the need for a training schedule that allows for the sustainability and continual implementation with fidelity. Administrative support of the program is a key factor in the sustainability of the program and increases its success (Chitiyo et al., 2012). SWPBS core teams cannot lose sight of the need for evaluating the program, and supporting, adjusting, and providing professional development before evaluating again, prior to beginning the cycle over again (Landers et al., 2012). Several strategies have been named to aid in the sustainability of the program, such as helping teachers translate the expectations into daily classroom interactions, continually looking for staff input in program maintenance, and purposeful leadership with a continued attitude of evaluation and growth of the program (Chitiyo et al., 2012; McIntosh & Bennett, 2011). It is also critical for teams to realize that although initial implementation and design may be labor and resource intensive, it does get easier with continued sustainability (McIntosh et al., 2009).

**Program results.** Several studies focusing on SWPBS outlined the reduction in discipline referrals, truancy, and instructional time lost (Caldarella et al, 2011; Curtis et al., 2010; Ruiz et al., 2012; Solomon et al., 2012). The decrease in discipline referrals allows for more time for students to be engaged in the classroom as opposed to engaged with discipline procedures (Fallon et al., 2014; Solomon et al., 2012). Minimizing disruptions, whether they be for discipline procedures or misbehavior itself, leads to increased achievement and students’ access to instruction (Fallon et al., 2014; Reinke et al., 2013). In addition to perserving
instructional time, SWPBS becomes a part of planned instruction within the school as students are continually instructed on proper behavior (Chaparro et al., 2012; Fallon et al., 2012; Fallon et al., 2014; Fuerborn & Chinn, 2012). When students have been instructed, understand, and can follow the expectations developed, the positive culture of the school will have positive changes.

The expectation for change is evident when the environment embraces a new initiative or program. Studies have illustrated the impact to the school environment when implementing SWPBS, and since much of the research is quantitative in nature, there are numbers and evidence to support the success of the program (Caldarella et al., 2011; Solomon et al., 2012). Curtis et al. (2010) completed a study that yielded a 40 to 60% decrease in behavioral referrals and 56.6% decrease in instructional time utilized for disciplinary action. A study completed in Texas illustrated at times, triple-digit decreases in certain offenses and types of referrals (Ruiz et al., 2012). A three-year study examining the effectiveness of SWPBS in a middle school showed that referrals of students leaving without permission dropped by 139, disruptive behaviors went from 471 reports to 40, and disobedience decreased by 177 throughout the study (Ruiz et al., 2012). This multifaceted program adds specific elements to school procedures, culture, and practice that aid in promoting behavior success for faculty and students. Whether the program equips teachers to handle misbehavior successfully, students adhere more readily to expectations, or a combination of both, the program has shown notable positive results.

While discipline referrals and behavior are a large focus of SWPBS outcomes, studies have also explored other benefits of implementing the program with fidelity (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Caldarella et al., 2011; Flannery et al., 2009; Kelm & McIntosh, 2011). One study did not focus on student success, but rather teachers’ self-efficacy when working with the program and they found those working with SWPBS had statistically significant increases in their
identification of self-efficacy (Kelm & McIntosh, 2011). Another study identified a statistically significant increase in teachers’ job satisfaction if the school is implementing SWPBS with fidelity (Ritcher et al., 2011). Job satisfaction is a critical and when a teacher does not have it they are more likely going to have higher stress levels that may lead to burnout, which causes a higher rate of teacher turnover and absenteeism (Kelm & McIntosh, 2011; Reinke et al., 2013). Teachers have indicated that classroom and behavioral management are the hardest parts of their jobs and one in which they receive the least amount of professional development (Reinke et al., 2013).

Another study examined organizational health of elementary schools implementing the program and found a statistically significantly positive impact on schools implementing the program with fidelity (Bradshaw et al., 2008). Organizational health is composed of core components including (a) resource influence, (b) staff affiliation, (c) academic emphasis, (d) collegial leadership, and (e) institutional integrity (Bradshaw et al., 2008). Attendance rates increase with proper use of the program within a school (Caldarella et al., 2011; Curtis et al., 2010; Freeman et al., 2015). Finally, researchers are working to determine if SWPBS has a positive impact on academic performance (Gage et al., 2015; Freeman et al., 2015). The results have not been consistent with some studies finding no statistical connection between academics and SWPBS (Gage et al., 2015; Freeman et al., 2015) and some finding a positive correlation (Horner et al., 2009; Ruiz et al., 2012). One of the most significant academic improvements mentioned was the reduction in exclusionary discipline procedures that resulted in increased instructional time (Fallon et al., 2014; Solomon et al., 2012).
State Support

With events such as Columbine and Sandy Hook embedded in recent history, school leaders and state officials are aware of the potential threat and the need for school safety as a priority. SWPBS is considered a preventative program that promotes safe school environments (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011). Prevention occurs through the specific instruction of expectations, systematic rewards for meeting expectation, and predictable consequences for not meeting expectations. Students’ perceptions of their safety have an impact on their academic performance and their ability to grow (Chapparo et al., 2012). Higher perceptions of school safety for both students and faculty occur when SWPBS is in place (Fallon et al., 2012; Kelm & McIntosh, 2011; McIntosh et al., 2009). The program encourages positive reactions to disciplinary situations, maintains student dignity, and allows students to feel safe through the predictability that the program provides (McIntosh et al., 2009). That predictability, positive approach, and ability to discuss school safety openly decreases the risk of violence occurring on campus (Caldarella et al., 2011; McIntosh et al., 2009).

Recently, there have been an increase in state departments of education and legislative bodies encouraging or requiring schools to have a systematic positive approach to student behavior management (Bradshaw, & Pas, 2011; Fallon et al., 2014; Ruiz et al., 2012). Lawmakers recognize the need for behavior management in schools and the direct impact it can have on student achievement (Ruiz et al., 2012). Some states have encouraged this participation through created support networks and giving districts and schools resources to be successful using SWPBS (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; PAPBS, n.d.). External facilitators, funding, trainings, and support as the program continues are ways that states assist school districts in implementing and sustaining these programs (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011). Some states have taken it to the next
level and have passed legislation requiring schools to have a proactive, positive approach to behavior management (Ruiz et al., 2012). SWPBS helps schools be in compliance with those requirements (Ruiz et al., 2012).

States such as Pennsylvania, Texas, and Maryland have made great strides with increasing and sustaining SWPBS within their school systems (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Ruiz et al., 2012). In 2001, Texas passed legislation encouraging schools to increase academic achievement through the implementation of a positive approach to behavior management (Ruiz et al., 2012). A three-year study of Texas seventh and eighth grade students showed a notable decrease in student discipline referrals, including disobedience, disruption to class, and leaving class without permission (Ruiz et al., 2012). The state of Texas recognizes that it has put this requirement on schools and is committed to providing consistent trainings and support for their districts (Texas Behavior Support [TBS], 2014). The support provided by the state includes connections to school safety and mental health services, as well as, encouraging the use of data to drive those connections and decision making for the program (TBS, 2014).

In Maryland, is one of the few states to have a a state-wide system of implementation and sustainability to support districts that using the program and has published their initiatives related to the program (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Lohrmann et al., 2012). Schools with high risk factors were more likely to adopt the program in Maryland, but they have more difficulty sustaining the program (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011). The state system offered support to these districts and schools in an effort to continue the program so real results can be seen (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011). Recently, Maryland has worked very hard to recruit new schools to begin the program and amp up the support and resources for not only new schools, but also those currently
running the program (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011). The state has worked with schools on readiness for the program, choosing leadership at the school level, and sustaining it when it is in place.

In Pennsylvania, the setting for this study, there is a state support network for schools who have chosen to adopt the program. This network gives schools resources and external facilitators to support implementation (PAPBS, n.d.) In addition, the network affords the schools the opportunity to be recognized for their accomplishments with the program and provides opportunities for professional growth through collaboration (PAPBS, n.d.). The network also provides links to other behavior and mental health support programs, such as Student Assistance Program (SAP), to encourage a unified plan within a school (PAPBS, n.d.). The state encourages, but does not require, SWPBS to be present in every school. In Pennsylvania the Department of Education places SWPBS networking and program support under its Bureau of Special Education, allowing for them to provide resources, assistance, and collaboration opportunities for districts (Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network [PaTTAN], 2011).

**SWPBS Team**

The ability for each school to tailor the program to their needs, student population, faculty, and community, is a large part of this program’s success (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011). When a new school begins an implementation process, they begin by creating a team to examine the current practices, school culture, and needs of the school (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011). Educators already working within the school make up the team, with a coach acting as the facilitator and leader of the team (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011). “A leadership team oversees these foundational activities, guiding implementation, and monitoring implementation fidelity of the critical features of SWPBIS” (Freeman et al., 2015, p. 1). When available the state provided external facilitator
is a valuable asset to the team and their development process (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011). They assist by being the expert on the program structure, while the school level team provides the expertise on their specific needs and culture (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011). This team will take the information about the current state of the school and begin to interweave that into the structure of the program, with the hope of forming a set of procedures that will work for their population (Marchant, Heath, & Miramontes, 2012). It is critical that the team gathers input from other teachers and faculty within the school and incorporates that into their program (Lohrmann et al., 2012). This will lend itself to greater buy-in and as an increased chance of success.

**Maintaining the program.** After building the program and creating the system, the team is then responsible for the management and continued implementation of the program (Chapparo et al., 2012). SWPBS support is designed to be a data driven program that allows teams to review data, make necessary adjustments, and determine which students need a higher level of support (Solomon et al., 2012; Sullivan, Long, & Kucera, 2011). This is part of the program design for ongoing evaluation and renewal to keep it running with fidelity (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Solomon et al., 2012). Factors such as an administrative change, student population shift, and inconsistent implementation can influence the successful implementation of the program. Behavioral data collection and review gives the team the information they need to meet regularly to collaborate and make program decisions (Solomon et al., 2012). Many teams utilize computer programs to assist with analyzing data and making operational decisions (Curtis et al., 2010). It is common for a SWPBS team to discover that a certain student, area of the building, a certain time of day, or event caused an increase in disciplinary action and may warrant an intervention (Curtis et al., 2010).
Managing office discipline referrals and behavior infractions is a daunting task for any school level team, but the School Wide Information System (SWIS) is a helpful computer program that many sites utilize specifically to aide in SWPBS data analysis (Freeman et al., 2015; McIntosh & Bennett, 2011; McIntosh et al., 2009). SWIS offers schools a web-based discipline entry and analysis feature that uses normed averages to aid in the analysis (Freeman et al., 2015). The report feature allows teams to view organized data regularly to make decisions about program alterations and interventions for individuals or the student body in its entirety (Curtis et al., 2010). While SWIS is widely used and recognized as effective, other computer programs, such as a district’s student information system, may be able to house and report data to meet the needs of the SWPBS team (McIntosh et al., 2009).

**Training.** A great task is laid before any team that is responsible for training their faculty and staff at large, making changes to the program when the data shows need, and asking teachers to implement the program with fidelity. Teacher buy-in is one of the most critical components and potentially the largest barrier of the SWPBS program (Chapparo et al., 2012; Fuerborn & Chinn, 2012). The SWPBS team is a powerful tool that will extend teacher learning beyond the initial day of training (Chapparo et al., 2012). Since the team is composed of teachers and educators from the school, and not outside observers, the perception of credibility and reliability increases among the faculty and staff (Fallon et al., 2014). This SWPBS coach and team is in constant communication and contact with the faculty, staff, and students that are living the program daily, allowing for the conversation and collaboration during decision making time to be maximized.

Every teacher must have a classroom behavior management plan to have a functioning, productive classroom. This is often considered by teachers to be one of the most difficult and
challenging parts of their job and daily interactions with students (Reinke et al., 2013). SWPBS give teachers tools to positively frame interactions with students, increase their knowledge about student behavior, and gain new strategies to assist with classroom management (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Solomon et al., 2012). In addition, teachers working in schools implementing the program, also gain resources and the support of their peers on the team (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Solomon et al., 2012). The difference between misbehavior that should be handled through classroom management strategies and discipline referrals is part of the training teachers receive when they are trained on the program (Ruiz et al., 2012). This instruction and new classifications for behaviors has a direct impact on discipline referrals and time taken from instruction to handle behaviors.

**Stakeholders in SWPBS.** Teachers may be the stakeholders that are the most impacted by SWPBS. Fuerborn & Chinn, (2012) found that teachers who are engaged in a SWPBS program typically change how they interact with students, how they handle discipline, how they instruct students in regards to behaviors, and how they interact with their superiors when working with students. The program is not only designed to help students control their own behavior and have a positive learning environment, but it is also designed for teachers to have a more positive, productive working environment (Kelm & McIntosh, 2011). A positive working environment can only be accomplished with administrative support, teacher buy-in, and consistent treatment of students (Lohrmann et al., 2012; Sullivan et al., 2011). It is stated that at least 80% of faculty must buy into the program for it be successful (Lohrmann et al., 2012). It is critical for SWPBS coaches and administrators to know and involve the staff as a whole when planning for, and shifting to this proactive positive behavior support plan (Fuerborn & Chinn, 2012). As
schools and districts plan for implementation of the program it is critical that they seek out and gain staff support.

In addition to faculty support, administrators need to support and facilitate the success of the program within the school. While teacher buy-in is critical, administrative buy-in can often make or break the program’s ability to operate (Lohrmann et al., 2012). Administrators hold the key to whether the program will be implemented with fidelity through their own commitment to the program, ability to hold staff accountable, and their allocation of resources to the program (Lohrmann et al., 2012; Richter et al., 2011). Planning needs to include how administrators will navigate through the program and take into consideration their own ability to follow through and support teachers and students in their role as leader, disciplinarian, and manager (Marchant et al., 2012). Ideally, administrators are vital, active members of the core SWPBS team and help make decisions about maintaining the program (Marchant et al., 2012). Principals who do support and work in schools that have SWPBS in place show higher rates of job satisfaction (Richter et al., 2011).

In any child’s education, teachers, administrators, and support staff are critical; however, another important set of stakeholders are parents. SWPBS cannot leave out parental and community involvement. The SWPBS team needs to be prepared and plan to include them in conversations, events, and communicate with them about the program (Fallon et al., 2014; Marchant et al., 2012). The community can provide a great deal of resources to the schools. Parents need to know the language and procedures SWPBS add to the school that their child is attending. Parents have valuable insight into children’s development, interests and behaviors that are needed when preparing a program such as this (Fuerborn & Chinn, 2012). When a team and program begin planning and implementing tier two and three interventions, parents should
be included in the plan to develop their individual student’s interventions (Marchant et al., 2012). Parents are a valuable resource that cannot be overlooked to achieve implementation with fidelity (Fallon et al., 2014; Fuerborn & Chinn, 2012; Marchant et al., 2012).

Finally, students are the stakeholders that will live under the outlined expectations and experience the rewards and consequences outlined by the framework. Flannery, Sugai, and Anderson (2009) encourages students to be represented on the SWPBS team and assist in decision making and leading the program. There are a variety of ways students’ voices can be heard throughout the SWPBS process, such as surveys, class competitions, student representation on committees, and simply asking them their opinions (Flannery et al., 2009). The level of student input and involvement in SWPBS decision-making must be developmentally appropriate and the older students are, the more impact their involvement will have on the success of the program (Freeman et al., 2015). SWPBS is designed to increase student outcomes in relation to academics, office discipline referrals, and attendance and when appropriate, it is important to include them in the process (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Caldarella et al., 2011; Flannery et al., 2009; Freeman et al., 2015).

**Special Education and SWPBS**

Special education is where the concept of proactive positive behavior management began (Landers et al., 2012). Students with severe disabilities responded well to direct behavioral instruction, explicit reinforcement, interventions, and reteaching (Caldarella et al., 2012; Landers et al, 2012). Positive Behavior Support (PBS) for students with disabilities and plans associated with it was included in the 1997 reauthorization of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), reinforcing the effectiveness of a positive behavior management system (Landers et al., 2012; Solomon et al., 2012). General education students responded positively to the same
approach to behavior management and as a result, SWPBS developed (Landers et al., 2012). As schools have adopted this approach, there have been concerns that students with disabilities do not receive tier one instruction and reinforcement (Landers et al., 2012). Richter, Lewis, and Hagar (2011) claimed that SWPBS is a bridge between general education and special education, giving them a common ground to begin collaboration. Traditionally, plans for individuals with disabilities have been multidimensional and allowed for changes in environments, skill building activities, utilized differentiated rewards, and engaged in activities that increased the quality of life for the individual (McClean & Grey, 2012). SWPBS is a proactive discipline model that uses instruction, reinforcement, and data analysis to make decisions regarding the program (Landers et al., 2012). Both cases use data collection and analysis and in both individual and school wide plans, the data becomes a critical component of sustainability and effectiveness of the program (Landers et al., 2012; McClean & Grey, 2012). The focus for individual students with disabilities is to fix the problem behaviors, but with SWPBS it is to fix the problem environment (Landers et al., 2012). The SWPBS program gives faculty an approach to behavior instruction, management, and reinforcement that can be successful for all students with or without disabilities (Richter et al., 2011).

Inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classrooms has increased with change in legislation and educational practices in recent years. This has also required teachers to differentiate instruction and support each student’s individual needs both academically and behaviorally. SWPBS has been shown to assist teachers in doing that more effectively and encouraging these students to set higher expectations and work with through difficulties with student (Kelm & McIntosh, 2011). One study outlined that the consistency that SWPBS offers, assists in minimizing exhibited behaviors from students with disabilities and high
behavioral needs (Curtis et al., 2010). School psychologists often contribute a great deal in the development of PBS plans for students with disabilities; however, they can transfer their expertise to SWPBS and assist on the core team with developing and implementing the program (Sullivan et al., 2011).

**School Culture**

Culture is difficult to classify, define or quantify; however, it is a critical component to a learning environment (Caldarella et al., 2011; Chitiyo et al., 2012; Fallon et al., 2012). Schein (1992) defined culture as a set of unwritten rules that people adhere to when trying to join a certain group. SWPBS enhances the culture by defining some of those behavioral rules and gives the group a unified purpose. Creating a positive, safe place for a student to learn is a critical component of a learning environment and has a significant impact on the school’s culture. The components of the SWPBS program need to be designed to enhance a school’s current culture, not replace or deny the fact that a culture currently exists within the school (Fallon et al., 2012; Solomon et al., 2012). This is where students are the critical component of the program. It is encouraged to include students in part of the SWPBS planning process, especially when discussing positive reinforcement to help determine what will motivate them to follow expectations (Fallon et al., 2012). This program empowers schools by allowing the core team to keep underlying key components of the program while adapting many facets to meet the needs of their student body and culture (McIntosh & Bennett, 2011). The development and implementation of the program is largely based on the SWPBS team and coaches’ perspectives and perceptions of the school climate and culture; however, after the program is underway, decisions should be made based on data and knowledge of how the program is running (McIntosh et al. 2009. One of the keys to the success of SWPBS is its ability to adapt to the
culture of any given school and the ability of the team members to make adjustments as they go (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011).

Creating or enhancing a positive school culture is a major goal of SWPBS (Chitiyo et al., 2012). One of the largest barriers to many behavior management systems is their attempts to alter, recreate, ignore or destroy the existing culture of the school and community (Fallon et al., 2014). SWPBS recognizes the importancs of both, the culture of the student body related to ethnicity and background, as well as, the social cultural norms created within and educational environment (Fallon et al., 2014). Cultures are enhanced by bringing students and faculty to a place where they have a common goal and direction (Kelm & McIntosh, 2011). The ability for a culture to adapt and grow with a new program of this magnitude relies heavily on the capacity of the leadership to inspire change with others willingly following (Richter et al., 2011).

Leadership within the program may come from the administration or the SWPBS coach which is specifically placed in that role to further the program within the school.

**SWPBS Coaches**

There are many quantitave research studies that provide evidence to support SWPBS as a proactive positive approach to student behavior management (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Caldarella et al., 2011; Solomon et al., 2012). This research focused on the reduction in discipline referrals, the reduction in truancy cases, and the overall impact and success of the program (Caldarella et al., 2011; Chitiyo et al., 2012; Ruiz et al., 2012). Other studies determined the impact the program has on teachers implementing the program and administrators involved with the program (Fuerborn & Chinn, 2012; Kelm & McIntosh, 2011; Richter et al., 2011; Royal, 2012). Information about state initiatives have been passed and requirements have been put on school districts to have a positive approach to behavior management (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Ruiz et
al., 2012). One group, however, is largely under represented in research and carries a lot of responsibility and influence through SWPBS and its implementation. This group is the coaches.

**Coaching in education.** Coaching is a concept that is not exclusive to SWPBS in educational environments. Coaching occurs in extra-curriculars with students and in classrooms to enhance literacy and mathematics instruction. Instructional coaching and SWPBS coaching are both peer coaching roles, in that teachers are coaching other teachers and staff (Deussen, Coskie, Robinson, and Autio, 2007; McIntosh et al., 2009). Crane (2002) summarized a list of seven elements for a coach to be successful: get to know people, understand both the good and bad aspects of the job, have clear expectations, give relevant feedback, be timely and candid with all responses, ask questions that facilitate growth, and help people feel supported and empowered. “A coach acts as a guide by challenging and supporting people in achieving their personal and organizational goals” (Crane, 2002, p. 31). A SWPBS may help support a teacher struggling to frame expectations in a positive manner while continuously supporting the framework and goals of the organizations SWPBS plan. Coaches within a school, instructional or SWPBS, collaboratively aid in teachers’ through decision-making and increase success within their daily profession.

**SWPBS coaching role.** The framework for SWPBS is clear that a leader, a coach, is needed for the program to be successful (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; PAPBS, n.d.). Initially implementation support came from an external coach that did not work the school assigned; however, the sustainability and effectiveness of that model came into question and resulted in a shift to a coaching model (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011). SWPBS coaches have a unique role and perspective on the SWPBS program. The coach is such a critical role that in some area schools that have not identified a coach or coaches for their school are not eligible for training from an
external facilitator to begin (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011). SWPBS coaches can be teachers, guidance counselors, or school psychologists who are willing to take on a peer leadership role (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011). These coaches are the leaders for the school wide team by facilitating meetings, guiding the planning, and taking a leadership role within the planning of the staff training. Their experiences and voices are not represented in the literature. The ability to step into such a role is not something everyone is capable or willing to do.

Implementation is the largest transition and time of change for a school. The lived experience of the coaches during implementation is unique and valuable. Bradshaw and Pas (2011) stated that there are few studies examining the initial implementation of the program. This study was designed to do just that from the perspective of the leaders that guide faculty through the implementation process. Generally, when new initiatives, programs, or directives are given to teachers they feel as though they are not given adequate training or support to fully implement and sustain the change effectively (Chapparo et al. 2012). The SWPBS model takes that into consideration and addresses it by placing a coach and team within the school to continue training and support. The core leadership is key to the success of the program and ongoing use with fidelity (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011). The unique focus on the implementation year from the coaches’ perspectives adds to the significance of this study and value it brings to the current body of literature on the topic.

Summary

SWPBS is estimated to be in use in over 18,000 schools across the United States of America (Fallon et al., 2014). The theories supporting this program and study come from Skinner’s (1961) operant condition theory, Bandura’s (2001) social cognitive theory, and Kouzes and Posner’s (2007) leadership principles. This structured program uses a three tier model to
incorporate positive incentives for meeting expectations, explicit instruction of the expectations, and clearly defined consequences when they are not followed (Caldarella et al., 2011; Solomon et al., 2012). It is estimated that 80% of students are successful in the universal tier; however, since 20% of students are generally not able to meet expectations in tier one, then tiers two and three must be developed to provide interventions to help them be successful (Caldarella et al., 2011). Implementation of SWPBS has been shown to decrease office discipline referrals, increase teachers’ perceptions of self-efficacy, increase organizational health, increase instructional time by minimizing exclusionary discipline practices, and increase the positive culture within a learning environment (Caldarella et al., 2011; Curtis et al., 2010; Ruiz et al., 2012). Implementation does not come without barriers, such as lack of administrative support, teacher buy-in, and data analysis systems (Lohrmann et al., 2012; Flannery et al., 2009; Ritcher et al., 2013). As great attention has been given to behavior management systems and the barriers to implementation, states have begun providing districts with support and resources to implement the program with fidelity (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; PAPBS, n.d.; Ruiz et al., 2012) A team is formed to support the school’s efforts to modify the framework to meet their level of need, culture, and available resources (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011). The core team’s leadership of the program is critical and becomes a resource for stakeholders, in addition to becoming the driving force to implement with fidelity (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Fuerborn & Chinn, 2012). Having its roots in special education has allowed SWPBS plans to develop and adapt to the changing needs of a student population (Landers et al, 2012). Finally, there are many studies and publications outlining the success of the program; however, there is a lack of research exploring the experience of the SWPBS coaches driving the program. The rich descriptions from those leading others through implementation would be a valuable addition to the body of research.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

School Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) coaches are those who step into leadership positions to help a school implement a program that focuses on positive behavior. This chapter outlines the plan for collecting data, data analysis procedures, and increasing the validity of the study. Moustakas’ (1994) framework for transcendental phenomenological research was the model for this study. I began this study by setting aside my own thoughts about the topic through the process of *epoche*. Data collection included individual interviews, a bulletin board focus group, and document analysis. After data collection and transcription, data analysis included continued *epoche*, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and a synthesis of the meanings, and essences of the phenomenon. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the trustworthiness of this study, as well as the ethical considerations and a summary.

Design

This transcendental, phenomenological study sought to describe the essence of SWPBS coaches’ experiences during the implementation of the program. The essence of experience can only come from those living, or who have lived the phenomenon, and requires examination of rich descriptions and narratives provided by the participants (Moustakas, 1994). Husserl’s (1931) work provides a framework and foundation for transcendental phenomenology. Moustakas (1994) cited Husserl being concerned with meanings and essences and the contrast between the real and non-real. This study focuses on the coaches’ experiences, explored through personal interviews, bulletin board focus groups, and document analysis. The interviews were face to face, while the bulletin board focus group and document submission were electronic, due
to geographical limitations. Moustakas’ (1994) framework also required me, as the researcher, to identify my own personal experiences and perceptions of others in order for me to tell the story of the co-researchers, not my own.

Transcendental phenomenology placed an emphasis on subjective inquiry and required me to set aside my opinions about the phenomenon in order to listen solely to the voices of the co-researchers (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) explained heuristic study as one that seeks to answer a question or problem in a scientific manner. Heuristic research approaches are not appropriate for this study as there is no problem or question, but rather a desire to understand the essence of the co-researchers’ experiences. The process began with the processes called *epoche*, the deliberate bringing forth of personal experience and setting aside to conduct the research (Moustakas, 1994). Journaling assisted in this process by allowing me to fully develop and recognize my own opinions before making the decision to separate it from the experiences of co-researchers. The goal of the study was to describe the essence of the SWPBS coaches’ lived experiences, not mine. This process continued throughout data collection and analysis to ensure each step was focused on the co-researchers’ experiences and not my own.

Data analysis began with transcendental-phenomenological reduction, that is, the action of deriving the textural description by working through the information provided by co-researchers (Moustakas, 1994). This began with descriptions of the themes shared by individual co-researchers (Moustakas, 1994). Next came the completion of a composite textural description, which synthesized individual themes of what it means to be a SWPBS coach during implementation into a universal description. This study required me, the human research instrument, to read and reread transcriptions of interviews, pull out statements of significance, and remove repetitive statements.
Imaginative variation occurred after transcendental-phenomenological reduction and is the process of arriving at a structural essence of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). It involves examining the structural dynamics that influenced the textural descriptions that formed the essence (Moustakas, 1994). Examination at the individual and corporate level occurred to create a description of the universal, structural influences the co-researched shared regarding their experiences during the year of implementation. In this study, I created the description by pulling meaning from the SWPBS coaches’ experiences. This allowed the research to move toward a synthesized meaning and essence of the experience of being a coach implementing this program.

Finally, a description of the essence with its meaning was produced from the textural and structural descriptions (Moustakas, 1994). This synthesis gives the reader an in-depth overall picture of what it is to be a SWPBS Coach during implementation. This is the culminating portion of the study and allowed me to generate the description of the essence of the phenomenon.

**Research Questions**

The desire to understand lived experience of SWPBS coaches during the year of implementing the program influenced the central and research questions of this study. The central question that drove the data collection was:

What are the lived experiences of SWPBS coaches, as peer leaders, during the school wide implementation year?

The research questions to support the central question are as follows:

1. What changes to the social system have occurred within the school related to the SWPBS coach’s interactions with colleagues as peer leaders?
2. How does the implementation of the program impact SWPBS coaches’ management of student behavior and their role as an educator?

3. What do SWPBS coaches view as barriers to successful, sustainable implementation of the SWPBS program, and how were they able to overcome those barriers to achieve implementation with fidelity?

4. What role does the SWPBS program play in enhancing the school culture related to students, staff and overall approach to student behavior management?

Sites

Many states in the United States have legislation that requires schools to have a SWPBS plan in place at the tier one level (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Ruiz et al., 2012). However, while Pennsylvania recognizes the value and supports the program, it does not require all schools to implement this program (PaTTAN, 2011).

Since there is no requirement, there are many schools still at the beginning stages of planning and implementing the SWPBS program. The experience of the coaches that have worked through the implementation process successfully is valuable information for schools that are just starting the process. The seven schools included in this study (listed with pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of the schools and the study participants) have implemented the program with fidelity, as defined by PAPBS. The coaches that participated in the study were in the coaching position during the initial implementation year. Since fidelity cannot be determined until after the year of implementation, coaches must recall their experiences from that time.

The PAPBS network publishes a list of schools using the SWPBS program with fidelity as measured by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. To be listed on the PAPBS list of schools using the SWPBS program with fidelity they must have attained passing scores on the
SET and BOQ, which are research-based measures of fidelity (PAPBS, n.d.). According to the PAPBS website, seven schools have implemented the program with fidelity and the coaches were in the position during the initial implementation year. Furthermore, each school, identified, as a possible research site has to be a public school at any level within the Kindergarten through sixth grade range. The coach must come from a school using SWPBS with fidelity. The entire school district does not have to be participating with fidelity as recognized by the state of Pennsylvania. Maximum variation was a priority with grade levels and demographic information of the SWPBS coaches included.

**Lakeside Elementary**

Lakeside Elementary is located in rural, central Pennsylvania and has been recognized for excellence in implementing SWPBS. The school is a kindergarten through fifth grade school and has two SWPBS coaches. This school has the classification as a school-wide title one school, with 46% of students classified as economically disadvantaged, 14% are classified as being in special education, and 100% of the teachers are highly qualified (Pennsylvania Department of Education [PDE], 2015). The student population is 97% Caucasian, with less than one percent for any other ethnicity (PDE, 2015). Finally, this school’s state performance profile is 71.4% (PDE, 2015).

**Mountain Elementary**

Mountain Elementary is a kindergarten through sixth grade school that has had SWPBS in place for four years. This school is also located in rural central Pennsylvania and received recognition for excellence in implementation of the program with the support of one SWPBS coach at this school. This school is a Title I school, with 48% of the students classified as economically disadvantaged, almost 20% classified as being in special education, and 100% of
the teachers are highly qualified (PDE, 2015). The student population is 99% Caucasian and the school performance profile is 75.9% (PDE, 2015).

Falcon Lake Elementary

Falcon Elementary is a kindergarten through fifth grade school that has been implementing SWPBS for more than two years and has been recognized by the state for using the program with fidelity (PAPBS, n.d.). The school is located in rural central Pennsylvania and is considered a Title I school. Close to 35% of the students are identified as economically disadvantaged, approximately 17% of students are in special education, and 100% of the teachers are considered highly qualified (PDE, 2015). The student population is 94% Caucasian and the school performance profile is 90.7% (PDE, 2015).

Cardinal Mountain Elementary

Cardinal Mountain Elementary is a kindergarten through fifth grade school that has been implementing SWPBS for more than two years and has been recognized by the state for using the program with fidelity (PAPBS, n.d.). The school is located in rural central Pennsylvania and is considered a Title I school. Close to 35% of the students are identified as economically disadvantaged, approximately 17% of students are in special education, and 100% of the teachers are considered highly qualified (PDE, 2015). The student population is 99% Caucasian and the school performance profile is 87.9% (PDE, 2015).

Eagle Port Elementary

Eagle Port Elementary is a kindergarten through fifth grade school that has been implementing SWPBS for more than two years and has been recognized by the state for using the program with fidelity (PAPBS, n.d.). The school is located in rural central Pennsylvania and is considered a Title I school. Close to 35% of the students are identified as economically
disadvantaged, with approximately 17% of students are in special education, and 100% of the teachers are considered highly qualified (PDE, 2015). The student population is 94% Caucasian and the school performance profile is 75.4% (PDE, 2015).

**Eagle Wing Elementary**

Eagle Wing Elementary is a kindergarten through fifth grade school that has been implementing SWPBS for more than two years and has been recognized by the state for using the program with fidelity (PAPBS, n.d.). The school is located in rural central Pennsylvania and is considered a Title I school. Close to 48% of the students are identified as economically disadvantaged, around 24% of students are identified in special education, and 100% of the teachers are considered highly qualified (PDE, 2015). The student population is 93% Caucasian and the school performance profile is 65.5% (PDE, 2015).

**North and South Elementary**

North and South Elementary is a kindergarten through fifth grade pair of buildings that function as one unit and will be considered one site. The buildings’ demographics and information are reported to the state together (PDE, 2015). These buildings are not considered Title I and have 18% of students labeled as economically disadvantaged, 9% of their students are receiving special education services, and 100% of their teachers are highly qualified (PDE, 2015). The school has 86% Caucasian with 5% Multi-racial and 4% Asian backgrounds (PDE, 2015). Their school performance profile fell at 88.8% (PDE, 2015).

**Participants**

The sample size for this study was 11 SWPBS coaches from the eight school sites noted above and having met the criteria of being in a public school that has implemented the SWPBS program with fidelity, with the SWPBS coaches in position during the initial implementation
year. Since fidelity cannot be determined until after the year of implementation, SWPBS coaches will be required to recall their experiences from that time. Moustakas (1994) outlined the importance of a sample size of 12 to 15 participants that have experienced the phenomenon.

A purposeful sample of co-researchers was selected based on the fact that all worked within their respective school before obtaining the title of SWPBS Coach during the implementation year. This gave the coaches the required experience with the phenomenon, implementing SWPBS, and the ability to participate. Maximum variation was having as much diversity among general and case specific characteristics of the participants (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). In this study, increasing maximum variation occurs through sampling from various schools and including those from different genders, level of educational experience, job titles, and sites.

Table 1

Demographic Information of Co-Researchers

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Years in Education</th>
<th>Years as SWPBS Coach</th>
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<td>-----------</td>
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**Procedures**

In order to conduct this study, I first obtained permission from each of the three public school districts that have schools with SWPBS coaches who received recognition for implementing with fidelity. After receiving IRB approval, I completed a pilot study at a site that met the same requirements as the selected study sites. The procedures for the pilot study were the same procedures as the actual study; however, neither the data nor participants were included with the study. The pilot served to refine questions and collection procedures (Creswell, 2013).

There were two participants in the pilot study and they completed each of the three data collection activities. During the pilot study I conducted face-to-face interviews, which helped me determine the timing of the interviews, the tone I should use throughout the questions, and the need for me to dismiss my desire to discuss the program with them as opposed to asking questions and listening to their experience. The letter to a new or perspective coach allowed me to have a frame of reference to discuss an example of the length of a complete answer and gave me a glimpse into what advice may be offered through this activity. Finally, the bulletin board discussion group during the pilot study shed light on the need to help facilitate discussion between participants. There were only two participants and while that may have contributed to
the lack of interactions between the two, it did make me aware of that potential limitation of the
data collection tool. During data collection I addressed these areas throughout.

After the pilot study was completed, I began to recruit co-researchers with the identified
districts. I made contact with them through an electronic or written recruitment letter (See
Appendix B for Recruitment Letter). Informed consent was required to ensure each co-
researcher was aware of their right to withdraw at any time and ensure the voluntary nature of
the study (Moustakas, 1994). Each co-researcher signed the consent form before any data was
collected (See Appendix C for Informed Consent Form).

Three forms of data collection were included in this study. I conducted face-to-face
individual interviews with the goal of gaining rich, in-depth descriptions of the SWPBS coaches’
experiences during implementation of SWPBS. The second data collection process was a
bulletin board focus group that gave co-researchers a digital platform to interact and discuss their
experiences. The final piece of data was a document analysis that included a letter created for
this study, to a new or prospective coach giving them insight, advice, and information about the
role. The three forms of data created triangulation to increase confirmability and allow
confirmed data across forms (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Face-to-face, interviews included open-
ended questions, a digital recording, and transcription for data analysis purposes. Geographic
limitations and ease of use influenced the use of an electronic bulletin board focus group. For
the third data collection tool, each co-researcher wrote a letter to a new or prospective coach
related to their new role. Data was analyzed by continuing *epoche* throughout the process to
ensure the removal of the researcher’s bias, then phenomenological reduction, followed by
imaginative variation, which culminates in a synthesis of composite textural and structural
descriptions (Moustakas, 1994).
The Researcher's Role

As an administrator who has worked through the planning process of SWPBS at a middle level school and is currently a school level principal of a school in its third year of implementation (third year after the year of planning), I have a level of knowledge and experience with the program. In order to truly get to the essence of a group of individual’s lived experiences, the researcher is required to bring her prejudice, feelings, and experience to the surface and make a decision to set them aside while completing the study (Moustakas, 1994).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) described the human instrument as a person-to-person data collection tool. As that human instrument, all data collection and subsequently analysis occurred through me, following Moustakas’ (1994) procedures. I interacted with co-researchers through each piece of data collection, face-to-face interviews, a bulletin board focus group, and the collection of documents. My professional relationship with the co-researchers was minimal for the most part; however, I do work in the same district as one of the schools. At the time of the study I was not working directly with the coaches included in this study, but have interacted with a few at various events. The remaining co-researchers are from districts and areas in which I have had limited interactions. There was minimal influence or prior relationships with any co-researcher.

Based on my own experience with the SWPBS program, I believe that it is a good program for students, staff, and a school’s culture. Lohrmann, Martin, and Patil (2012) outlined that teacher and staff buy-in is one of the most critical barriers that coaches and other leaders have to overcome before moving forward with the program. As an administrator, when implementation of a new initiative happens, I expect my staff to participate to the best of their ability, if for no other reason than I asked them to implement it. A SWPBS coach does not have
any supervisory influence over their peers and therefore may have a different experience leveraging colleagues to implement the program with fidelity.

**Data Collection**

My data collection process for this study gathered information regarding the lived experiences of SWPBS coaches during the implementation process of the program. The goal of each collection method was to understand a different part of the experience without causing disruption to daily life. The three methods for collecting data were individual interviews, a bulletin board focus group, and document analysis.

Before submitting my IRB application, I completed an expert review of the questions for the interview and bulletin board focus group question. To complete this expert review, two individuals who hold doctorate degrees, have knowledge of, and some experience with the SWPBS program reviewed all questions for both interviews and bulletin board focus group. This served to validate the questions and ensure that the content of the questions would gather appropriate information from the co-researchers to answer my research questions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The first reviewer holds a doctorate degree in educational leadership from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. She is currently working at an intermediate unit that supports and provides professional development related to SWPBS. Her suggestions led me to adding a question related to the impact of SWPBS relationships with parents, which relates to the discussion and research question that addressed the culture of a building using SWPBS. It also led to me editing an interview question to discuss the networking and outside supports a coach may reach out to during the implementation process. Finally, she pointed out areas where I could add more specifics about what the coach needed throughout initial implementation and continued use of the program, and how fidelity is monitored.
The second reviewer holds a doctorate degree from West Virginia University in school psychology and works in two districts that utilize the SWPBS program. This reviewer suggested that wording is critical to understanding the question and what information is desired. He also made good points about being specific with questioning and led me to change the wording in some of my questions for the interviews and bulletin board focus group. His feedback and specific descriptions of culture aided me in creating interview questions that asked specifically about relationships. The suggestions he offered also helped in my consistent use of the word influence, in the relationship portion of the interview to promote consistency in the questioning.

**Interviews**

The interview was the initial data collection tool. I conducted each interview was in a face-to-face individual setting using a set of open-ended interview questions to gain rich descriptions of their experience (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) stated that phenomenological studies are about the descriptions of experiences and typically long interviews provide deep descriptions. Interviews with SWPBS coaches occurred at the co-researchers’ schools or a convenient public location, such as a coffee shop. Each co-researcher interview occurred once and lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. Since fidelity cannot be determined until after the year of implementation, coaches must recall their experiences from that time.

**Open Ended Interview Guide**

**Implementation Year**

1. Please describe your role as SWPBS coach in your school.

2. Please describe the culture surrounding interactions with students in your school before and after implementing SWPBS.
3. Why do you feel you were selected for this role and why did you accept the role as SWPBS coach?

4. Please describe, as specifically as possible, your experience implementing SWPBS in your school.

5. Please describe the barriers you faced during implementation and the process of overcoming barriers in order to implement the program with fidelity.

6. Please describe your greatest achievement as a SWPBS coach.

**Relationships as a Coach**

7. How has being a SWPBS coach influenced your interactions with students?

8. How has being a SWPBS coach influenced your interactions with colleagues and the network of educators supporting you through implementation?

9. How has being a SWPBS coach influenced your relationship with administrators?

10. How has being a SWPBS coach influenced your relationship with parents?

**Coaches as Educators**

11. What is your philosophy of education?

12. How does SWPBS fit into that philosophy?

13. What is your philosophy of behavior management and how has SWPBS fit into or affected that?

**Impact of SWPBS**

14. How and who monitors the SWPBS data and continued implementation with fidelity?

15. How has SWPBS impacted the student discipline, attendance and achievement data?

16. How has SWPBS impacted behavior management school wide?
17. What barriers does your school face during continued implementation of the program and what solutions have you found helpful to overcome these barriers?

The focus of the study was to determine the essence of the experience of SWPBS coaches during implementation year. Questions one through six began the discussion of the implementation year for the coaches and directly supported the central question of this study. Kouzes and Posner (2007) discussed leadership as a series of decisions and behavior, rather than a personality and questions one and three gives the co-researchers the opportunity to describe their role within their school and why they feel they are in this leadership position. Question two focused on the co-researchers description of the culture, which is a critical outcome of SWPBS. An increase is positive school culture is an expected outcome of SWPBS implementation with fidelity (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Caldarella et al., 2011; Sugai et al., 2012). For many schools simply getting through initial implementation of the program can be a difficult process due to barriers but in the team’s way (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011). The implementation process is multi-faceted and requires the team to give attention to barriers, such as administrator support, stakeholder buy-in, and limited resources, in order to achieve success. (Fallon et al., 2012). This led to the development and inclusion of question four. The BOQ specifically asks the faculty to determine implementation fidelity to identify the barriers to implementation (Fallon et al., 2014). SWPBS coaches have reported that there are major barriers to implementation of the program school-wide (Fuerborn & Chinn, 2012). The discussion of barriers continues to appear in the literature and prompted questions five and 15 to be included, aiding in answering the third research question (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Fallon et al., 2014; Fuerborn & Chinn, 2012; Lohrmann et al., 2012; McIntosh et al., 2009). Bradshaw and Pas (2011) outlined the requirements in Maryland for each school implementing SWPBS with fidelity to have a coach
for the program and their variety of responsibly within that role. Kouzes and Posner (2007) discussed that those in leadership roles may employ common principles of success, but they will execute them in unique ways. Question six allowed the co-researcher to talk about their success within their role as coach.

Bandura (1993) shared the importance social interactions and perceptions one has on personal accomplishment and evaluation of self. A SWPBS coach must navigate a plethora of social situations in relation to the program through the year of implementation. Questions seven through nine focused on the relationship and interactions a coach will have with students, colleagues, and administrators, supporting the first research question. SWPBS coaches are educators, and changes in student achievement, discipline, and attendance are some of the greatest indicators of successful implementation (Caldarella et al., 2011; Fallon et al., 2014; Ruiz et al., 2012). Question seven focused on coach-to-student interactions, while question eight moved the interview into coaches’ interactions with colleagues. Staff buy-in is one of the largest barriers to complete implementation of the program with fidelity (Fallon et al., 2012; Fuerborn & Chinn, 2012; Marchant et al., 2012). Marchant, Heath, and Miramontes (2012) shared, “More specifically, lack of staff buy-in was characterized by poor communication, resulting in miscommunications and confusion surrounding simple procedures and desired goals” (p. 226).

The relationship between the coach and the staff is critical to the success of the program. Finally, administrative support of the program is critical to program success. Lohrmann, Martin, and Patil (2012) sited the lack administrative support as one of the most frequently identified barriers to full implementation of the SWPBS. Principals in schools with SWPBS implemented completely showed slightly higher effective rates within their schools (Richter et al., 2011).
School administration is a key component to the program and prompted the question 9 in the interview process.

    Education is an art and a science. Personal philosophies, attitudes, perceptions, and feelings influence an educator every day. Fuerborn and Chinn (2012) discussed philosophical beliefs and how critical they are to the success of the program. Coaches, as leaders of the program, are required to align their philosophies with those of SWPBS. This prompted questions 10 and 11 and helped answer the second research question. Behavior management is at the heart of SWPBS. Bradshaw and Pas (2011) described SWPBS as a proactive approach to changing staff and student behavior in an educational setting. Skinner (1961) wrote about specific techniques for controlling human behavior and conditioning to influence actions. SWPBS focuses on rewarding students for appropriate behavior while creating a place for interventions and consequences when students cannot abide by the established expectations (Fallon et al., 2012; Fallon et al., 2014; Fuerborn et al., 2012; Reinke et al., 2013). This prompted the behavior management questions, number 12 and 14.

    Question 13 supported the fourth research question and discussed data and the changes that could occur during implementation. Research discussed the positive impact SWPBS had on grade point averages and office discipline referrals (Caldarella et al., 2011; Fallon et al., 2014). Kelm and McIntosh (2011) shared the increase of teachers’ self-efficacy with SWPBS implementation with fidelity within their school environment. Bradshaw and Pas (2011) included a discussion of truancy rates and the decline in absences when SWPBS was present within the school. The large body of literature that has discussed the impact on student data after the implementation of SWPBS led to the inclusion of question 13.
**Bulletin Board Focus Group**

Focus groups are a form of interviewing where participants come together in a group setting and the researcher listens to gather information (Creswell, 2013; Krueger & Casey, 2009). I used a bulletin board focus group that took place in a virtual setting as the second form of data collection. This is a common mode of professional development and communication in school districts and was familiar to many of the co-researchers, taking on the form of an online discussion group. Each co-researcher created or used a free Edmodo.com account, an online platform designed for interactions and discussion boards, to interact on prepared discussion boards with open-ended questions about the phenomenon. Those participating in the bulletin board focus group were asked to create an ambiguous screen name and not to reveal identifying details about themselves or schools they are working in. Confidentiality and the ability to have an open discussion were high priority.

This method overcame the geographical limitations of those participating in this study. Kruegar and Casey (2009) defined a bulletin board focus group as “a limited number of people agree in advance to participate in an asynchronous electronic discussion over the course of several days” (p. 178). This was an opportunity for the co-researchers to interact with each other in the bulletin board daily for five days. They were required to create an original response to the question, reply to as many of the other participants’ posts as possible, as well as, respond to each co-researcher who responds to them. They were encouraged to participate as much as they could. When completed I recovered, recorded, and organized responses from the site.

Open-Ended Bulletin Board Focus Group Questions

*Barriers to Implementation*
1. During the SWPBS planning year, what was the biggest area of focus for you and your team and why?

2. What barriers did you and the SWPBS team face during implementation and how did they affect initial implementation?

3. How did you and your team overcome the barriers discussed in question 2?

4. What advice do you have for a new coach or team that is preparing for implementation?

On the first day of the bulletin board focus group activity, the co-researchers responded to this question:

1. During the SWPBS planning year, what was the biggest area of focus for you and your team and why?

When preparing to implement SWPBS, there is a year of planning that needs to take place before using the program throughout the general population of a school. A team, led by the SWPBS coach, needs to create a behavior matrix that outlines three to five expectations that are broad and can be applied school-wide (Lynass et al., 2012). They also need to prepare to train staff and instruct students on the behavioral expectations, all while keeping their school’s culture and atmosphere in mind (Fallon et al., 2014). Each team must decide how the program is going to look within their environment and take time to prepare for it and to address possible barriers and issues before implementation (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011).

As the bulletin board focus group continued into day two, co-researchers read the responses from the previous day, if they have not already, and responded to the other participants before responding to the following:
2. What barriers did you and the SWPBS team face during the implementation year and how did they influence initial implementation?

There is also a body of literature that discusses the benefits and results of SWPBS implementation (Solomon et al., 2012). Teacher buy-in, as cited in literature, is one of the largest barriers coaches face (Lohrmann et al., 2012; McIntosh et al., 2009) and reduction in office referrals as a benefit of the program (Caldarella et al., 2011; Fallon et al., 2014). Each coach’s experience is different and may or may not include these results; however, it is shown that there are barriers and benefits to implementation in the literature that warranted further exploration through bulletin board focus group discussions.

When the co-researchers logged-in on day three they were asked to review responses that were posted from the previous two days, respond to other researchers on both days, and respond to the following as the day three prompt:

3. How did you and your team overcome the barriers discussed in question 2?

Implementation of SWPBS does not come without its barriers and difficulties, especially when beginning to implement it (Fallon et al., 2014). The bulletin board focus group’s goal is to have co-researchers begin reflecting and thinking back to the implementation year and what hindered that process. Having the coaches reflect and describe their experience overcoming barriers to implementation is a key component to the implementation and peer leadership experience. One of the measurements of fidelity in the state of Pennsylvania is the BOQ, which has a component that asks about barriers faced when implementing the program (Fallon et al., 2012). While each team will face and have to overcome different barriers, Fallon (2012) identifies the lack of communication between leadership and faculty, difficulty developing a reward system, and a poor leadership team as barriers to implementation.
The final prompt came on the penultimate day of the bulletin board focus group and came after co-researchers reviewed the previous three days and replied to threads and conversations throughout. The fourth and final prompt was:

4. What advice do you have for a new coach or team that is preparing for implementation?

Coaches are in a unique peer leadership role that has its own challenges. This question had coaches reflect and share what they have learned with others. Lohrmann, Martin, and Patil (2012) recognized that coaches have a unique perspective on barriers and factors related to implementation. The coach is in place to drive the program and provide staff support for continuous implementation (Bradshaw & Pass, 2011) and their expertise would be valuable for any new coach or team. The information gleaned from this discussion gave the coaches’ perspective on how they would take what they have learned from their experience and apply it to a new program site.

The final day of the bulletin board focus group consisted of co-researchers responding to others from the final prompt and completing any conversations that are ongoing from the previous four days. The final day was an opportunity to review each day and make final remarks on the topics.

Documents

For the purposes of this study, co-researchers wrote a letter to a prospective or new SWPBS coach using their experiences to give advice to someone entering the position of a coach. These letters were solely for the purpose of this study. The letters gathered from each co-researcher were stored in a document file. The letters completed the data collection and culminated the coaches’ involvement. This written communication gave the SWPBS coaches an
opportunity to discuss all aspects of the role of a coach including both positive and negative responsibilities of the position, and what they would do differently if they had the chance.

**Data Analysis**

Data collection took three forms, individual interviews, a bulletin board focus group, and document analysis. I transcribed each personal interview and bulletin board focus group verbatim to prepare for data analysis. The document analysis mirrored the process employed for interview and bulletin board focus group transcript analysis. Analysis of all three data types followed the procedures Moustakas (1994) outlined for conducting a transcendental phenomenological study.

**Epoche**

The process of *epoche* continued from data collection into data analysis to ensure that I, as the researcher, continued to set aside prejudgments to allow the experiences of the co-researchers to be the focus (Moustakas, 1994). This was a systematic approach to acknowledge predetermined ideas a researcher may have and making every effort to set them aside before working with the data collected from co-researchers (Moustakas, 1994). I accomplished this by continued journaling and recognizing what my thoughts and feeling in relation to the phenomenon were at that particular time (see Appendix E for Epoche Journaling). Finally, I made every effort to set my thoughts and feelings aside as I began the data analysis portion of the study.

**Phenomenological Reduction**

This portion of the data analysis process was in place to determine individual and composite textural descriptions that emerge from the provided data (Moustakas, 1994). As the researcher, I needed to read and reread the data, pulling from it significant statements and start to
group them into meaningful themes (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) outlined three questions that need to be asked when working to confirm the identification of the themes by comparing the themes to the transcripts of data: “(a) is the theme complete?; (b) are the themes compatible with the transcript?; and (c) if they are incompatible or irrelevant, should they be deleted?” (p. 121).

After I have immersed myself in the data and read the transcripts several times, I placed the data in brackets (see Appendix G for Sample of Data Analysis Coding). This allowed me to focus on the topic and questions related to the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). After I bracketed the data, I began horizontalization. This was a process where I considered every statement equally. From there, the process was to eliminate repeated statements, questions, and those statements that are irrelevant to the topic (Moustakas, 1994) (see Appendix F for Enumeration Table). This produced horizons and themes from the data (Moustakas, 1994). From there, development of textural descriptions for each co-researcher, as well as a textural description for the group occurred (Moustakas, 1994). These descriptions came together for the development of the essence of the experience (Moustakas, 1994).

**Descriptions and Essence**

After the identification of themes, development of textural and structural descriptions of the experience was completed (Moustakas, 1994). This began by taking the individual descriptions of experience and synthesizing them with the experiences of the group of coaches. This gave me, the researcher, the information needed to articulate a composite textural and structural description. The textural description focused on the themes, as described by the coaches and identified from the coaches’ experiences. At the same time, the structural description focused on the themes that were identified from those same descriptions. Using each
co-researcher’s experiences to develop these descriptions, and then bringing them together to describe shared experiences, led to the final analysis of the data (Moustakas, 1994). The final component of data analysis was a description of the essence of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). This essence was from the descriptions of the group as a whole (Moustakas, 1994). The description of the essence included a synthesis of all themes and descriptions that have been identified to give the experience of being a SWPBS coach meaning.

**Trustworthiness**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) discussed using credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability when completing the study to provide an ethical approach to the study. The following outlines how the study addressed each of these areas.

**Credibility**

Credibility is the process of assuring the study is transferable and dependable (Creswell, 2013). To increase credibility, this study contained triangulation and member checking. Triangulation is the use of multiple data sources to corroborate the findings and confirm their credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, the three forms of data were the interview transcriptions, bulletin board focus group transcriptions, and document analysis to create a variety of sources to assist in describing the essence of the experience. After the data collection and analysis, member checking occurred. Member checking is where the co-researchers have the opportunity to review the transcripts and analysis and provide feedback (Creswell, 2013). This allowed the co-researcher the opportunity to provide feedback on the information collected and confirm or deny the information’s accuracy. The co-researchers were able to view the transcript from their interview, and those who replied indicated that they were surprised about the number of um’s they used during their response or discussed grammatical errors. Lincoln
and Guba (1985) discussed the importance of involving the stakeholders in the process to add to the credibility of the analysis.

**Transferability**

Transferability is the ability for the study to apply to other populations or areas (Creswell, 2013). The main component of transferability is maximum variation that includes the following characteristics in this study: (a) males and females will be mixed as much as possible, (b) diversity in position held by the coach (counselor, teacher, school psychologist), (c) varied number of years in education, and (d) a mixture of elementary, middle and high school educators. This increased the ability for the implications of the study to apply to a larger population of schools.

Phenomenology conveys the essence of a lived experience shared by a group of people after removal of personal bias of the researcher (Moustakas, 1994). A key component is thick descriptive data, which is the detailed information provided from participants (Moustakas, 1994). The data will describe the essence of the phenomenon, aiding in transferability (Moustakas, 1994). The information coming from those in the field acting as coaches applies to others in the field.

**Dependability**

Moustakas (1994) provided the description of taking a moment and bracketing out one’s experiences and setting them aside in an attempt to be as objective as possible. This is critical when establishing dependability. The purposeful and deliberate examination and awareness of my own feelings allowed for a more open mind, minimized bias, and provided greater dependability for the study (Moustakas, 1994). Making the decision to not allow those feelings, opinions, and experiences to influence me as the human research tool is critical. In addition to
purposefully setting aside personal bias, I was also deliberate in completing an audit trail to
document the efforts to have all information reviewed (see Appendix D for Audit Trail). Audits,
and the recording of them are critical to ensure the authenticity of the researcher and the work
completed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**Confirmability**

Peer reviews enhance confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I employed one peer
reviewer who was very helpful to confirm the validity of my research findings. This person
works at an intermediate unit that supports the program, and assists in training and support of the
program. Her doctoral degree is from Indiana University of Pennsylvania in educational
leadership. She has worked in education for 31 years and has worked in elementary classrooms,
administration, and professional development roles. In addition to her professional feedback on
the process and data collected, this, along with my review and member checking, provided a
third means of data analysis ensuring triangulation that added to the confirmability of the study
(Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**Ethical Considerations**

Throughout the study, it was a priority to keep all materials confidential. Data and
information recordings were stored on a single computer that is password protected. I was the
only person to have access to the computer password. When collecting, coding, and analyzing
the data, I gave pseudonyms to all districts, schools, and co-researchers to protect the identity of
the stakeholders. Once assigned pseudonyms, the stakeholders’ identities and information were
not stored together, thus adding further protection. Co-researchers used their assigned
pseudonyms when discussing any persons, interactions, or places they described or wrote about
during the data collection process. This was put into place to protect professional relationships,
professional integrity, and ensure that anything disclosed remains confidential. I stored all paper copies of any information in a locked cabinet with access restricted only to the researcher. Shredding paper documents and erasing digital files, three years after the completion of the study, will destroy the data. In addition, if a participant drops out of the study, his or her data will be destroyed immediately by shredding paper documents and erasing digital files for this participant and no part of this data will be included in the final analysis.

**Summary**

In this chapter I outlined the research plan for collecting and analyzing data in an effort to describe experiences of SWPBS coaches during their first year of implementation. I discussed the completion of data collection, how data will be analyzed, and what will be put into place to validate the study. This chapter gives the reader a way of knowing how I conducted the research and gives justifications to questions asked. The goal of describing the lived experience of the coaches was in the forefront, allowing their voices to be heard.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the experience of SWPBS coaches during their year of implementing the program within their building. Throughout the research I gathered the experiences of 11 co-researchers that have been identified by their districts as coaches for the SWPBS program. These educators consisted of three males and eight females, working in kindergarten through fifth grade learning environments. They participated in a face-to-face individual interviews, a document prompt, and a bulletin board focus group. I collected, organized, analyzed and interpreted the data using Moustakas’ (1994) model for transcendental phenomenology.

The chapter begins with a review of the research questions, followed by a description of each co-researcher. Since districts and schools have very few SWPBS coaches, their identities are protected as much as possible through the use of pseudonyms, for not only personal identity but also schools. Then the chapter outlines the themes identified from the co-researchers’ experiences, organized by the four research questions that guided the study. A figure is included to represent the essence of their experience, developed from the textural and structural descriptions.

I designed the study to gain a description of the essence of SWPBS coaches’ experiences during implementation of the SWPBS program. The following questions guided the research:

1. What changes to the social system have occurred within the school related to the SWPBS coach’s interactions with colleagues as peer leaders?

2. How does the implementation of the program impact SWPBS coaches’ management of student behavior and their role as an educator?
3. What do SWPBS coaches view as barriers to successful, sustainable implementation of the SWPBS program, and how were they able to overcome those barriers to achieve implementation with fidelity?

4. What role does the SWPBS program play in enhancing the school culture related to students, staff and overall approach to student behavior management?

For the purposes of this study, the phenomenon being explored was the implementation year of SWPBS in a kindergarten through fifth grade public school in rural Pennsylvania. This study was concerned with the experiences of the co-researchers and having their collective voices heard.

Participants

The term co-researcher replaced the term participants when talking about the coaches throughout the study, because as a social researcher I encouraged the co-researchers to become involved and partner with me through the research (Fraenrich, 1989). This chapter introduces the 11 co-researchers who participated in the study. A purposeful sample of participants was created because each of the co-researchers carried the title of SWPBS coach within their school and district. Each of the co-researchers works within a public elementary school that has been recognized as implementing the program with fidelity, as defined by PAPBS. There were three males and eight females who participated in the study.

Basic demographic information for each co-researcher is listed in Table 1 in Chapter Three. The following sections include a narrative description of each of the co-researchers. In order to depict accurately the co-researches’ voices, I included all quotes verbatim, including any grammatical or spelling errors.
Michaela

Michaela is a third-grade teacher at Lakeside Elementary and has been teaching for six years. She has been the SWPBS coach for three and a half of those six years. Michaela shared her excitement about the SWPBS program. She shared,

I was excited that we were the pilot school so we could, kind of, play it out and see what we could create and come up with and change our environment here. I was excited with the challenge of it. (Michaela, Individual Interview, January 19, 2016)

Shelly

Shelly is a kindergarten teacher at Falcon Lake Elementary and has been teaching for 23 years. She has been SWPBS coach for eight years. Shelly discussed with me why she felt she was asked to be the SWPBS coach within her building:

Um, as a K [kindergarten] teacher I think it is a fantastic fit because in this building since there is only one grade of everything, every student, except for new ones coming in, has been my student. Instant rapport, instant respect. We already have that rapport because I was their K teacher so that helps a lot. It was a natural fit in this building. (Shelly, Individual Interview, February 2, 2016)

Emily

Emily is a second-grade teacher at Lakeside Elementary and has been teaching for nine years. She has been a SWPBS coach for three and a half years. When Emily began speaking about the program in relation to all students, the level of importance she put on it was clear,

I think it is important, I was one of those kids who did always follow the rules, just because I was supposed to, and I really wanted to see those students shine and also be rewarded for making those choices. (Emily, Individual Interview, January 20, 2016)
Sue

Sue is a second-grade teacher in her twelfth year of teaching. She is currently at Eagle Wing Elementary and has been a SWPBS coach for three years. Sue lamented about how SWPBS has impacted her as an educator:

I have learned that it doesn't matter what gets done on paper each day that counts, more about making sure they feel that they are in a welcomed, loving atmosphere when they are here. I think that has been a huge twist from when I started teaching until now.

Matt

Matt has been an educator for twenty years and is currently the principal at Lakeside Elementary. He has been a coach in two buildings with six years of experience using the SWPBS program. Matt, as an administrator, comes to the program with a different perspective and shares his greatest achievement relating to SWPBS:

I think, my greatest achievement is that it works whether I am there or not. It’s, I can't take all on my own. It is that idea that there is nothing more powerful than an idea whose time has come sort of thing. They see the value in it. The people on the committee really believe in it. Really, almost everybody in the school believes in it. It works better than being negative and always punishing (Matt, Individual Interview, January 29, 2016).

Josh

Josh is an experienced teacher working in education for 16 years. He is a kindergarten teacher at Cardinal Mountain Elementary School. Josh has been a SWPBS coach for eight years. His enthusiasm for the program was easy to spot throughout the data collection process and is illustrated during the individual interview, “You have to be crazy as the school wide coach. If
you are not willing to put yourself out there forget it. So that sums me up” (Josh, Individual Interview, February 2, 2016).

**Dave**

Dave is drawing upon 19 years in education and has taught in several districts, worked in a variety of leadership roles, and is currently the principal at North and South Elementary. Dave has been a school wide coach for four years at North and South Elementary. Dave was able to share what about the program was most important to him:

> You know, it is about relationships too. We continue to hammer in on do what, most of them are relationship based. It was hot chocolate with me, or breakfast with me . . . It might be game time with the counselor or extra iPad time for a class. So you know, it is kids being about to acknowledge that with other kids. You know, we don't do a whole lot of trinket type stuff (Dave, Individual Interview, January 20, 2016).

**Kelly**

Kelly is a fourteen-year secretary for Eagle Port Elementary and has accepted the leadership role of SWPBS coach for the last eight years. She also assumes a leadership with the program at a district level. Kelly’s commitment to the program is unwavering as she explained, “I will tell you right now if I didn't believe in this 100%, I wouldn't put the work into it” (Kelly, Individual Interview, February 2, 2016).

**Becky**

Becky is in her fifth year as a school psychologist and fourth as a SWPBS coach. She is currently serving in those roles at North and South Elementary. Becky, closed her document reply and advice to a new coach with this, “I wish you all the best in this process - it is hard work
but it is rewarding and worth it! When you see the kids’ enthusiasm and hear their cheers for acknowledgments, it makes it all worth it” (Becky, Document Reply, February 2016).

Lisa

Lisa is in her eleventh year of teaching and has held several positions. She is currently the SWPBS coach at Mountain Elementary and has been a coach for the last five years. When Lisa was discussing herself as a coach she mentioned, “I am just very positive constant” (Lisa, Individual Interview, January 28, 2016), which is a valuable quality in her roles.

Jess

Jess is the second coach at Mountain Elementary and has been for the past three years. She has been a coach since she began teaching three years ago. Jess painted a picture of what it is like to be a SWPBS coach:

A SWPBS coaching position is a role that wears many hats. Each of these hats are balanced, not only by your head, but also by the heads of the teammates surrounding you. With the support of your team, community and time, there is no other rewarding position that can top this spot. As a teacher, we value the subject matter that our students learn, but more importantly, we value the character of our students and the positive choices that they will make, as a result of SWPBS, the rest of their lives (Jess, Document Reply, February 2016).

Results

When supporting selected themes, I used participant statements and a representative sample of responses from interviews, document replies, and the bulletin board focus group contributions. This section is organized by research question and outlines the themes that were
identified to address each question. Each quotation from the co-researchers was chosen to support the theme and allow their voices to be heard throughout the results.

**Research Question One**

The first research question, “What changes to the social system have occurred within the school related to the SWPBS coach’s interactions with colleagues as peer leaders?” was designed to gather experience related to the SWPBS coach and their interactions with colleagues as they lead a program as a peer. The question brought out three themes: (a) the SWPBS coach is the encourager and cheerleader of the program; (b) the SWPBS team is a critical part of success; and (c) although being a SWPBS coach is a leadership role, there is no positional power to make certain decisions.

**Coach as a cheerleader.** When talking to SWPBS coaches about coaching role, many talked about being positive, staying true to the course, and helping faculty and staff understand the program and specific responsibilities. Josh commented, “I am their school cheerleader” (Josh, Individual Interview, February 2, 2016). Part of making the program successful was getting information out to the staff to increase the buy-in potential. Michaela lamented about how she felt during that time, “How am I going to do this in the classroom with all these other things I have to do and so really helping the staff understand what their role was and what they had to do” (Michaela, Individual Interview, January 19, 2016). It was very important that coaches take their time and answer staff questions, give out appropriate information, and help teachers understand what actually needs done. Some of the co-researchers went as far as assisting their staff members with the data entry portion of the program. Emily shared,

So we've tried to do things to get them to buy-in, offered to have them like go ahead and write down the behavior and we will help them to fill out the electronically and things
like that still. So, we kind of take them as they come. (Emily, Individual Interview, January 20, 2016)

SWPBS coaches were very willing to do what it takes to aid, assist, and make the program successful for all faculty and staff.

The program also helps coaches get to know faculty and staff they may not otherwise interact with on a regular basis. Sue shared one such experience:

I started implementing a PSSA assembly, where it was kind of neat because I didn’t have anything to do with third, fourth, and fifth grade, but that was part of being a building coach was that I interacted with them. (Sue, Individual Interview, February 2, 2016)

Josh shared similar experience with his ability to reach out to all adults within his building:

You are there to help them with problems, you are also there to say hey I need your help. It helps us to work together. It is a good community of teachers. I have the secretary, custodians, and kitchen staff. They are all on board. We are all on board. (Josh, Individual Interview, February 2, 2016)

There is a necessity in this role to reach out to everyone who is working with the students in the building, encouraging them and helping them to be successful with the program. Hand in hand with that, in this role doors have been opened for these coaches to help those that may not have been open, or easy to approach in the past. Becky illustrates that through her comments:

I got to know some teachers and have a good rapport with them, which leads to good rapport in other situations with kids. I think for a couple of members on the committee that may be seen as little closed off or hard to approach, I felt that one in particular, I got to know him in a different setting. He has a good sense of humor and I feel that we have a pretty open . . . rapport now and he will come to me and ask questions now about kids.
And who knows if I didn't know him that well in that setting maybe he wouldn't feel comfortable doing that. (Individual Interview, February 3, 2016)

Emily shared in her individual interview that this role as coach has pushed her out of her comfort zone a bit and empowered her to confront things that need addressed, in a respectful, productive manner. She stated that the push into the leadership role has been good for her and allowed her to grow as an individual and changed how others view her (Emily, Individual Interview, January 20, 2016). They now come to her with questions, even veteran teachers, and ask her for advice related to the program. Being that constant support, encourager, and cheerleader are critical parts of the SWPBS coach’s role and subsequent success of the program.

**Building a team.** SWPBS coaches cannot run the program alone, and several of them talked about the leadership team that they lead and the support they provided during implementation of the program. In addition to looking at the team with colleagues from within their school, many coaches looked to the external coach provided by the State Department of Education, through the Intermediate Units (IU), as a valuable member of the team. Becky shared her enthusiasm for working with her IU consultant:

> I am really, really happy that we worked with our IU consultants because they basically tell you, ‘Here's what you need to do.’ ‘Here's what it could look like.’ ‘Take these documents and make them work for your schools.’ Without that I think it can be an extremely overwhelming process. (Becky, Individual Interview, February 3, 2016)

Other co-researched shared similar experiences when reaching out and receiving help from their external coach. The ability to have someone come from the state giving the expectation to the program was very valuable to the coaches.
The building leadership team needed to be formed carefully. If it is not formed strategically too much of the responsibility can fall solely on the coach or coaches for the building. Some schools have combatted that by forming committees that each take on a responsibility related to SWPBS. Lisa shared in her document reply, “Form committees that include more members of the school staff to get new ideas and give them a sense of ownership” (Lisa, Document Reply, February 2016). This allows for many more people to have ownership and be a part of the team surrounding the implementation of SWPBS. Emily commented:

Make sure you rely on your support team. Lean on them and use them in any facet you can. For too long I have carried the weight of the team because others would not, and I refuse to let it fall apart. But, I have started to ask for help from those few and give some of the burden away. The saying “many hands make light work”[sic] is so very true. (Emily, Document Reply, February 2016).

There are many components to SWPBS and no one leader can accomplish it on their own.

It is critical that the make-up of the team needs to be purposeful and helpful in moving the program forward. Dave shared what his team looks like:

The folks we have on the team we try to get a spectrum across so there is someone from the learning support and someone from the various grade levels and so forth. And it is organizing meetings, it’s getting data together, it’s finding people who’s [sic] going to help facilitate the acknowledgements we do weekly and monthly. (Dave, Individual Interview, January 20, 2016)

Sharing responsibilities, leading the team, running the program, and creating more ownership of the program, are some of the most important interactions with colleagues the SWPBS coaches have during program implementation.
Lack of positional power. SWPBS coaches, for the most part, are peer leaders who do not have positional, administrative power. It can be at times difficult for them to lead, especially if there is not full faculty and staff buy-in into the program. Each district defines the role of SWPBS coach differently and as such, the individuals holding the position may have different job titles. Most of them, however, are educators or support staff who do not have supervisory positions over faculty and staff. Michaela shared her frustration:

I am capable of taking leadership roles and handling things and trying to do what is best for the school, but at the same time it is difficult because I am not their boss. And there are different times where I am in charge of saying things and I feel that they get the impression; well, you are not my boss (Michaela, Individual Interview, January 19, 2016).

While there is great responsibility in a peer leadership role, it is difficult to execute without positional power. The co-researcher unanimously said they had support of their administrators and being a SWPBS has given them the opportunity to collaborate with them and be a part of the decision making process; however, they have little autonomy with decision making. Lisa shared:

I think there is a different attitude, as oppose to an attitude about you have to do this.
And when you are not an administrator and you are a coach. It is really hard to accept that you have the right to say, ‘Hey we are going to do this.’ You have to have administration supporting you too (Lisa, Individual Interview, January 28, 2016).

It is critical that the coach and administrator have a good working relationship to keep the program moving forward.

Some of the outliers of this study were the two administrators who were included as coaches because that is how their district defined them. As administrators, however, they may
have a supervisory role over their faculty and staff, which makes directives a lot easier to pull off, however, they still need support from central office administration. The SWPBS program requires resources, public relations and procedural support. This also comes into the discussion about district teams, for consistency, which was not in place at every school district.

Research Question Two

Research question two, “How does the implementation of the program impact SWPBS coaches’ management of student behavior and their role as an educator?” was designed to illustrate how the SWPBS program and their role as coach impacted a SWPBS coach’s student behavioral management and their role as an educator. When speaking with the co-researchers and reviewing their submissions, it was clear that there was one theme that came from this question: SWPBS did not greatly impact their behavior management or role as an educator because they were naturally doing much of what SWPBS requires before the program was in place. When talking with the coaches and reviewing the data it became very clear that these educators were chosen or choose to be coaches because they were already committed to much of what the program stands for, promotes, or requires. What the program did for many of them was allow them to work with and share their basic ideal of student behavior management with others and add a structure to it. Josh shared his overall approach:

I am a pretty positive person when it comes to behavior, mine has always been: focus on the positive as opposed to the negative. I have multiple student teachers that come into my classroom, and it is like, the same thing I say to them, focus on the positive, the negative will fix itself. Now, that doesn't mean you don't address the negative, you have to, you don't have a choice. You have to address that. Because that is my philosophy, when they brought up the whole school, I was like how is this any different than what I
am doing. For me it wasn't a big buy-in, which is why when it first started, I was like, oh yeah let’s go, let’s get started. Let's do it. This is great. This is my idea. (Josh, Individual Interview, February 2, 2016)

In the same respect another co-researcher, who is now a special education itinerate teacher, illustrated how it looked in her classroom prior to the program:

I just think, I totally believe in positive reinforcement. I am big on ABA. I think my position lends me to that. I did a lot of that when I taught. I was the teacher with the belt and little treats and things. I am just very positive constant. (Lisa, Individual Interview, January 28, 2016)

Throughout the day there were no indications that the SWPBS coaches had to make dramatic or drastic changes to their own personal work as an educator as a result of the program. One teacher said, “It is kind of allowing them to make better choices and have that avenue to make the better choices” (Michaela, Individual Interview, January 20, 2016). The program allowed these seemingly positive people take their approach to students to a new level of leadership.

**Research Question Three**

Research question three, “What do SWPBS coaches view as barriers to successful, sustainable implementation of the SWPBS program, and how were they able to overcome those barriers to achieve implementation with fidelity?” was designed to gather and understanding of the process of implementation, specifically the barriers the coach faced and what could be done to overcome the barriers. Three themes were identified from the data in answer to this research question: (a) faculty and staff buy-in is not an easy task and you may not always have complete buy-in; (b) the time required to operate the program effectively is a barrier; and (c) the necessary
resources to effectively operate the program are not always readily available, causing stress for the coach. Many coaches discussed these barriers and several possible solutions were presented.

**Faculty and staff buy-in.** One of the most difficult tasks for a SWPBS coach is the task of having faculty and staff buy-in to operate the program on a daily basis. This was clearly the biggest area the co-researchers wanted to speak about. They felt that during the implementation year securing as much faculty and staff buy-in as possible was critical to the success of the program. Many spoke to specific ways they attempted to increase buy-in. Jess shared, “Teacher buy-in was one of the greatest barriers that the program faced during implementation. With any change, there are always going to be some who do not accept as quickly as others” (Jess, Bulletin Board Focus Group, 2016).

One of the largest reasons cited by the SWPBS coaches for staff to refrain from buying in was a philosophical difference about how behavior management should look within a school. It was stated several times that many, seemingly veteran, teachers did not feel that students should be rewarded for exhibiting behaviors that are expected of them. Shelly commented:

> There were some people that did not buy into the program 100% and felt like we were rewarding expected behaviors. It is important to stay ahead of this negativeness and provide as much evidence, examples and reasons why it is implemented in this way.

(Shelly, Individual Interview, February 2, 2016)

One of the coaches included in the study spoke to changing some of the wording within their program to help staff process the philosophical difference and allow them to feel better about participating in the program:

> I would focus on the whole idea of ACKNOWLEDGING positive behavior versus REWARDING and discuss how we all like to be acknowledged. I would also focus on
the acknowledgments being relational or educational as much as possible versus trinkets (Naysayer may find this easier to swallow). (Dave, Document Reply, February 2016)

Creative approaches to gaining teacher buy-in do not stop there. Several of the teams began pulling naysayers onto the program leadership team to give them more ownership of the program. Many coaches talked about the importance of remaining positive, flexible, and staying the course, even when not everyone supports it.

Another attempt coaches employed in an effort to increase staff buy-in was to incorporate staff incentives into their program. Staff incentives took different forms and included things from pulling names of staff members that are using the program, to including everyone in a special treat, such as a hot chocolate bar. Kelly suggested starting small and working from there, “Weekly drawings for the students and a little monthly incentive of candy or food for the staff is just a suggestion to get things rolling” (Individual Interview, February 2, 2016).

The buy-in does not stop with teachers, but rather continues for all staff that work with students. All support staff who have direct or indirect contact with students should be using the SWPBS system in their interactions with students. Josh shared his techniques:

All the bus drivers are bought in. I do things where I give them soaring eagles tickets, they give it to the kids. I do drawings for the bus drivers. I give them gift cards, I give them t-shirts, if we do a school-wide shirt or something we give them a t-shirt, we do this to get ideas, but find ways to get the drivers on board. (Individual Interview, February 2, 2016)

Each school had to find a way for their own staff to buy-in to the program. Sue commented that, “Once some teacher incentives were offered, it helped” (Sue, Individual Interview, February 2, 2016).
In order for a program like SWPBS to be successful, it is not enough to have administrative and leadership support to push and guide the program; it is also critical that those in the trenches running the program on a daily basis with students have an understanding and willingness to use the program appropriately. Research illustrates that one of the largest barriers is teacher buy-in and willingness to use the program properly (Fallon et al., 2014; Fuerborn & Chin, 2012; Lohrmann et al., 2012).

**Time required.** Schedules are a difficult thing to manage in any educational setting and adding in the responsibility of a new program and developing the many components that produce successful implementation. The co-researchers illustrated that throughout data collection. The challenge includes taking time to create the time for the program, “It took time to figure out how to provide time for the coach and at times other team members to meet and complete the items that needed done for the program” (Lisa, Bulletin Board Focus Group, February 2016). Other coaches discussed the need to for time to conduct follow-up training with staff, while others discussed the time needed to implement each step with fidelity was difficult to find at times.

Coaches are passionate about the program and about it succeeding. Many sacrificed personal time to work on the program with very little extrinsic reward for the extra effort. Michaela describes her experience around the time requirements during initial implementation:

The initial stages of everything take a lot of time; personal time as well. There were many nights that we stayed late at school, came early, or took items home to complete. For this I suggest being very organized. We’d always create a master schedule of events listing kickoffs, booster sessions, celebrations, and monthly events. (Document Reply, January 19, 2016)
This illustrates the need to create time for this program and the shear dedications of the coaches leading the charge. Some coaches are lucky enough to have time built into their schedules, while others are not. Continued work with administration, organization and creative scheduling are ways that coaches have found to overcome the time barrier. Having reasonable expectations, using team members to help and scheduling things in advance have helped and sometimes, time is the only thing to help overcome this barrier. Becky illustrates that when she talks about their lesson preparation and how practice makes perfect:

I think something that we underestimated was just the details of carrying out some of these things associated with school-wide. So you think ok we made our lesson plans and we have everybody to do the lessons. Whoa, what’s that going to like? How are we going to schedule this? Who is going to schedule it? Ok, we need someone to announce when it is time to move. Do we want to do it as a whole grade level? Do we want to divide it up? So you live and you learn, just like anything else. Now we have a lot of things like our classroom lesson plans, our acknowledgment system, they are like smooth and this is our fourth year of doing it and we’ve learned each year (Individual Interview, February 3, 2016).

Scheduling and other timing conflicts can get better with practice, reflection and adjustment. Emily comments, “Even four years later, we still have to make changes. It’s never a ‘set in stone’ program, so be open-minded to try something new” (Document Reply, February 2016).

**Resource availability.** Many coaches struggled to obtain physical resources to support the operation of the program. While the program was supported by administration, the budgeting support was minimal. The reward system embedded in the program for students is a large component and can be expensive. Michaela shared that, “One of the biggest barriers was
funding. We had a ton of ideas for rewards, celebrations, and how to promote the program but we had trouble finding the best way to do it on a small to nonexistent budget” (Bulletin Board Focus Group, February 2016). Most of the coaches discussed reaching out to the parent teacher groups or organizations for support of the program. Becky stated:

PTO has supported us a lot. We also stuck with non-tangibles that can be an obstacle too.
To overcome that we really focused on options that are relationship based or activity based and didn't do as many gimmicky, stuff sort of things. (Individual Interview February 3, 2016)

A lot of the coaches encouraged going out into the community for support. Lisa commented, “We have a lot of community involvement” (Individual Interview, January 28, 2016). Kelly does not have as much physical support from the community:

Cost - finding money. We try to do the best we can. We would love to buy the bigger stuffed animals for three dollars to give away but we just can't. We don't have the funds. The cost is the biggest. Getting financial support. Like I said this year the district stepped up. It would be great, to get community to get more support . . . we have one store, it’s just not here now . . . We try to put a little bit of money aside in our budget for incentives so that we have. (Individual Interview, February 2, 2016)

Planning ahead and know what the needs are for the year can help with the resource issue that many coaches and teams face.

Many coaches commented that they often look for other ways raise or to circumvent the need for physical resources or money. Jess organized a fundraiser to serve several purposes, including monetary resources:
Time and money and we created an event as part of the program for the kids that created money and that was the 5K run/walk. Doing things that kind of both parts of that. That has helped in a way. (Jess, Individual Interview, January 28, 2016).

In another school they focus most of their energy on relationship building and less on physical items, Dave discussed that:

You know, it is about relationships too. We continue to hammer in on do what, most of them [rewards] are relationship based. It was hot chocolate with me, or breakfast with me, I have some kids coming up with what I have to do with kids. It might be game time with the counselor or extra iPad time for a class. So, you know, it is kids being about to acknowledge that with other kids (Individual Interview, January 20, 2016).

Lisa encourages many avenues for funding sources, or avoiding the need for funding sources:

Funding can also be difficult. Utilize things that your school already has. Look to local businesses and parents for donations. There are many free things that students enjoy that cost nothing, such as extra gym time, sitting in the teacher’s chair, a no homework pass, and game time. If you are going to fundraise, often one large fundraiser that ties into the program is beneficial . . . There are also grants that can assist your program. (Individual Interviews, January 28, 2016).

While funding is difficult, there are many avenues to overcome or avoid the need to find funding. The continued theme was the need to be creative and think in a variety of ways on how to run the program.

**Research Question Four**

The final research question, “What role does the SWPBS program play in enhancing the school culture related to students, staff and overall approach to student behavior management?”
is designed to gather information related to the change in culture that the coaches see with the implementation of SWPBS. This presence of this question brought out data surrounding two themes: (a) the consistency and common language the program creates within a school, and (b) positive framing of behavior management throughout the school. Coaches discussed each of these two in different ways, but it was evident that these were themes that were seen across schools and districts. Some components of the program that aided in these themes were also discussed.

Consistency and common language. Many of the coaches stated that before the implementation of the SWPBS system their culture and atmosphere within their schools was not what they were characterize as bad; however, SWPBS helped to make it better through consistency. Dave commented, “It is not that we have this terrible, nasty, awful population of kids prior or post . . . we wanted to have this kind of universal, consistent language” (Individual Interview, January 20, 2016). Shelly described her culture a bit differently:

Our building used to be called Shangri la, because people would want to come here. We didn't have a lot of issues. So, it wasn't a huge leap when we started it. It sort of just nailed up some missing gaps in behaviors and just brought it and synched it up and was the final pulling together like a family when we implemented it. Specific children, specific behaviors that would pop up. In general we don't have a lot of behavioral issues so we didn't have a lot to address. But when we did have those we needed a way to frontload it so we would prevent behaviors so we did have to deal with it afterwards. (Individual Interview, February 2, 2016).
Each coach stated it a bit differently; however, no one had major issues before the implementation, but as Lisa mentioned, “I don't wanna say that we ever had a real problem with that, but I do see improvements, even since we started” (Individual Interview, January 28, 2016).

One of the areas that the coaches saw as an improvement was the common language and consistency that the program brought to their school. Michaela painted that picture:

Before they knew the rules and for the most part, for the majority they would follow them. There was really no consistency with the rules. We would have kids a lot of time say . . . you know, well this teacher says it this way or this teacher says it that way and they knew the basic rules, but it was not as consistent once we had the implementation ruling all staff and students were on the same page. There was no longer when this teacher was on duty I can do it this way it is this is it and this how it is going to be done (Individual Interview, January 19, 2016).

Coaches appreciated the fact that SWPBS eliminates the guesswork for students. There is a lot of turmoil in students’ lives already, as Matt shared, “Students hear the same message (mostly), and that makes their life in school easier. We present plenty of challenges to our young learners. We don't need to complicate their lives with inconsistent messaging regarding their behavior” (Document Reply, February, 2016). The culture, along with daily operations, is impacted by the consistency of implementation by faculty and staff.

**Positive framing.** Working hand in hand with the consistency that the program promotes, the positive framing of interactions with students at all level in another shift in the culture and actions within a school using SWPBS. Matt illustrated this in his document reply:

Not only will it be effective, it will change how every member of the school community acts and thinks about student behavior. As a result, the tone and culture of the school will
take a turn for the positive. Hearing teachers thank and praise students for walking in an orderly way in the hall is so much nicer to be around than hearing them holler ‘Stop running!’ (Document Reply, February 2016)

Focusing on the positive was a constant throughout the data collected from the coaches. Kelly shared her experience and the change over her fourteen years of service:

Well, school wide focuses on positive behavior, you know 14 years ago when we started, you didn't look for the positive you were just looking for the kids who are making bad choices. And those are the one you focused on. Whereas now you are putting your energy and time in focusing on the ones that are positive and the ones that are doing it right. Showing the reward system to those kids and then the kids who habitually come, an area where they are going to make a bad choice, we are not solely focusing on that, we are encouraging them to be in the spot light. It makes a difference. (Individual Interview, February 2, 2016)

Finally, there is an awareness surrounding the amount of negative interactions a student has a school versus the positive ones. Many coaches commented specifically about that ratio and the awareness of it within their school. Becky shared her feelings, “I think, I hope, that is has made teachers more mindful of the type of feedback that they give and how much positive should surround the negative. We have to watch that ratio” (Individual Interview, February 3, 2016). Making the positive a focus, making faculty and staff aware that needs to be the focus and allowing for the change to happen over time has impacted each of these schools’ cultures.

Summary of Results

When coaches accept the leadership role that comes with the title, they put gears into motion to allow the program to run effectively and efficiently. These cogs will stop moving due
to significant barriers and the coach is forced to perform regular maintenance to ensure every moving part is running smoothly. They also have to realize that the maintenance needs to continue as the program does and more moving parts, such as committees, may be added as the system grows. Changes will continue to need to be made and the leadership role may change over time, but as Kelly mentioned, “Now I would like to say ‘sit back and watch it work’ but I cannot. You will need to look at your program constantly” (Document Reply, February 2016). Figure 1 illustrates the very start of the cogs the coach puts into motion after implementation.

Figure 1. Essence of SWPBS Coaches Experience

Each cog is moving in their own direction and it is imperative that the coach has a view of that picture and understands the importance of each of the components. They are responsible for keep the program moving forward and maintaining each moving part.

Summary

The findings of this study were outlined in this chapter. The coaches’ voices and experiences within their role as SWPBS coach were outlined and presented under each research
question the study is designed around. After outlining the co-researchers using their pseudonyms, themes that were identified from each research question were outlined. As the themes were recorded, textural and structural descriptions come forth and were explored to create the essence of theme of what the co-researchers were saying. I provided an illustration in Figure 1. SWPBS coaches play a critical role in keeping the SWPBS program running within their school. They have to keep each part moving and functioning, as it should.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

This study reported the lived experiences of SWPBS coaches during the implementation of SWPBS program within their school. This chapter covers: (a) the summary of findings, (b) a discussion of the finding and implications, (c) an overview of study limitations, (d) recommendations for further research, and (e) the conclusion of what SWPBS coaches experienced during implementation. This study investigated SWPBS coaches’ experiences implementing SWPBS in schools that have reached a level of implementation with fidelity at the universal tier as recognized by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Chapter Three outlines the criteria to reach fidelity of universal tier. These coaches have experienced implementation with fidelity and have shared a unique experience.

Summary of Findings

The co-researchers who participated in this study are employed in four different school districts in central Pennsylvania and represent seven elementary schools. They shared a great deal of information about the necessity and difficulty of staff buy-in during the implementation of the SWPBS program in their respective schools. They shared stories of staff members that the program outlasted, generally due to retirement, and the need to keep moving forward, regardless of a few people’s opinions. The unique approaches to combating negative naysayers were shared. Each coach and their leadership team found different ways, from bringing naysayers on to the team to offering rewards, to entice those who may not agree with the program to buy-in. There was great discussion around intrinsic versus extrinsic motivators.

Another area where coaches shared a great deal of experiences was the necessity for resources to run the program. SWPBS is a new program in many areas and is a program that
requires resources to implement. Many districts struggled to directly allocate such resources needed. Many of the coaches I spoke with reached out to parent groups, community members, grant opportunities, and utilized resources they already had to make up for a lack of a budget. Along with physical resources, coaches talked a lot about time resources, whether it was their time or time within the daily schedule within a school. Many of the coaches worked with administrators to help create the time required to implement the program with fidelity.

Finally, the discussion around the shift in culture that was created through the implementation of the program was focused largely on consistent language and positive interactions with students. The coaches shared that although not perfect, the culture within their individual schools was not terrible before the implementation of the program; however, the SWPBS gave them the framework to be proactive about potential negative behaviors, a common language, and expectations for all staff and students, and a way of positive framing for feedback to students no matter the behavior. This allowed for an increased positive culture and more respectful interactions to develop on all levels.

**Discussion**

The three theories that guide this study are Skinner’s (1961) operant conditioning theory, Bandura’s (2001) social cognitive theory, and Kouzes and Posner’s (2007) leadership principles. The foundation of SWPBS is rooted in, Skinner’s operant conditioning theories, Bandura’s social cognitive theory and those who lead the program should be adhering to Kouzes and Posner’s leadership principles. Skinner outlined how humans are influenced by outside stimuli and conditioning and this was evident when staff buy-in was discussed and the differences of opinion about how to utilize external reinforcers to alter student behavior. Bandura discussed how external, environmental factors influence behaviors and the shift in culture around a consistent
language and positive framing illustrates the environmental influences and changes that are outlined by this theory. A safe, positive learning environment is critical for student success and SWPBS helps address that need for educators (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Chitiyo et al., 2012; Fallon et al., 2014). Kouzes and Posner’s five principles of leadership distinctions are illustrated throughout the experiences that the coaches shared; however, they were very evident when the coaches discussed how the program for them was not a large shift in behavior, philosophy or behavior management. These leaders were already modeling the way and in many cases inspiring others, challenging the traditional methods, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

Successful implementation of SWPBS requires at least 80% of the faculty and staff buy into the concept (Flannery et al., 2009; Fuerborn & Chinn, 2012; Lohrmann et al., 2012; McIntosh et al., 2009). The coaches understood that need and worked tirelessly to get as close to that 80% as possible, at times against great odds. While the co-researchers within this study did not describe barriers with administrative support, as the research outlines (Chapparo et al., 2012; Lohrmann et al., 2012), they did describe a need for resources and time set aside for this work. These are both areas that administrators largely control or at least have influence over. Administrators need to be made aware of specific needs and ideally be an active participant in continued implementation of the program (Chapparo et al., 2012; Lohrmann et al., 2012).

Bradshaw, Koth, Bevans, Ialongo, and Leaf (2008) discussed the organizational health of elementary schools implementing SWPBS and found significant positive impact on schools implementing the program with fidelity. This was evident in the conversations with the coaches as they discussed the common language, positive framing, and positive interactions with students within their individual schools. A positive working and learning environment can only be
accomplished with administrative support, teacher buy-in, and consistent treatment of students (Lohrmann et al., 2012; Sullivan et al., 2011). The consistant language created by the program allows for a positive culture to emerge from it. This positive culture should also extend to support from the community and parents, which is a critical component for the success of any educational program (Fallon et al., 2014; Marchant et al., 2012). The coaches included parents and their communities as a resource related to physical supplies for the program through parent groups and activity volunteers. This, however, gives them a positive experience within the school and builds that positive culture even further.

The coaches shared a lot of their credit for the culture shifts and workload with their leadership team and external coach support. The team is a critical part of sharing the workload, facilitating the consistency, and implementation with fidelity (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Freeman et al., 2015). The co-researches talked about the support of their team and the ability to rely on them to break up the workload, support the program, and assist with problem solving around barriers impacting the program. The external coach was identified as a helpful member of the team that is provided to public schools from the IU. The Pennsylvania state department recognizes the importance for a positive student behavior management program and supports it through the support of external coaches. The SWPBS coaches found it to be helpful and useful to their continued implementation of the program. This has become a trend across the country as state departments and legislative bodies have increasingly put this requirement on public school entities (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Fallon et al., 2014; Ruiz et al., 2012).
Implications

This study looked at the experience of SWPBS coaches through theoretical, empirical, and practical lenses, yielding information that may be helpful to several parties utilizing or preparing to utilize SWPBS within their school.

SWPBS Coaches

This study discussed barriers, processes, and results that elementary SWPBS coaches experienced. The information surrounding overcoming barriers would be especially practical for coaches or future coaches to review and apply to their own decision making process. This study also outlined Bandura’s (2001) theory about environmental factors impacting behavior, and coaches need to be aware of the impact their program has on the environment within their school. This environment cannot be dismissed and has to be carefully monitored and managed. The program will change and evolve with time, but that will not happen without the leadership and guidance of the coach. The coaches, who clearly applied and displayed Kouzes and Posner’s (2007) principals throughout their leadership and discussions within this study, gave an overview of the experiences of those who have successfully lead this program to recognition of implementation with fidelity.

Administrators

Several times in the data, the co-researchers addressed the importance of administrative support of the program and active engagement in its implementation. It was also revealed that there are some barriers that administrators may overlook or leave to the coaches, but if identified the administrators could be a great help and support in overcoming them. Administrators who are coaches may understand the needs better than anyone; however, those who are not administrators need continued support of their administrative team, whether it is time, physical
resources, or decision making. Kouzes and Posner (2007) stated that a leader must inspire a shared vision and administrators working with coaches on SWPBS need to share that vision with their coaches. After that vision is shared they need to work with their coach through the four remaining principals: (a) modeling the way, (b) challenging the process, (c) enabling others to act, and (d) encouraging the heart. This study, in addition to outlining what successful leadership in a coaching role looks like also outlined much of what a coach will go through, allowing an administrator to pick someone who can handle those situations successfully.

**Policy Makers**

Finally, this study can be useful to policy makers because it paints a picture of what one of their encouraged, if not mandated, programs looks like for those leading it in the trenches. Within the findings it outlined the coaches’ perceptions of their external coaches, provided by the state and their usefulness to the school building level. This study also discussed the need for physical resources to sustain a positive behavior management program within a school and policy makers have control over much of the resources public schools receive. In addition this study discussed the impact of such programs on schools and school culture. This is critical information when deciding if a program should be mandated, supported, or disregarded.

**Limitations**

This study was a qualitative design with voluntary participation by SWPBS coaches in central Pennsylvania. The district’s definition of a SWPBS coach, their professional position, genders of the co-researchers, the location and academic level of the study, the self-reporting nature of the data, and participation on a voluntary basis limited this study. The four districts that were included in this study each had different approaches to handling the assignment of a building level coach for SWPBS. This lack of consistency created a group of co-researchers who
currently held roles from secretary to administrator completing the duties of building level SWPBS coaches. This created outliers in some of the data, due to the great differences in the role and responsibilities the coaches held. These determinations also created a group of co-researchers that was largely female; however, the years of experience in education varied from just a few years to 23 years. This may limit the ability for males to relate to all of the data presented.

This study was completed entirely in central Pennsylvania elementary schools. This study is limited in its possibility to transfer it to all levels, pre-kindergarten through high school levels, as it was only completed at the elementary level. It was also geographically limited to central Pennsylvania, which could limit its transferability to other areas of the country or even state. Central Pennsylvania is largely rural and may limit the application of some of the content to more urban or developed schools.

Finally, the self-reporting and voluntary nature of the study may have impacted what data was collected during the process. As leaders, the SWPBS coaches in this study may want to come across to others as though their program is more successful than it is. All of the coaches within the study have reached recognition for implementing with fidelity and may not have faced as many barriers as schools that did not reach that level of implementation. This may have inhibited the nature of the barriers discussed, the level of information received of the ability for some schools to relate to the items discussed. The voluntary nature allows for a participant to complete all or part of the study as they see fit. This was not a large limitation, but one participant did not complete the focus group portion of the study, thus limiting that data.
Recommendations for Future Research

This study lends itself to future opportunities for research. SWPBS coaches are in place in buildings from pre-kindergarten to high school and further research may be conducted at the pre-kindergarten or secondary levels to determine if coaches within those settings have similar experiences implementing the program. In conjunction with that, working through additional qualitative research related to administrators’, professionals’, paraprofessionals’, parents’, and students’ experiences with the SWPBS program will be beneficial to further implementation and growth of the program. The lived experiences of those within a phenomenon, such as implementing SWPBS, will add to the overall understanding of program implementation. Within that qualitative research, several areas could be a focus, such as, implementation, barriers, culture, or experiences with tier two and tier three implementation.

Studies pertaining to peer leadership roles within programs across grade levels would also add to the body of research relating to educational leadership. Administrators within schools rely heavily on peer leaders to help execute and keep programs, such as SWPBS, moving forward. SWPBS is not the only area that peer leadership is a critical component within education. Many instructional programs rely on peer leadership support and expertise to continue implementation with fidelity. These leaders may be instructional coaches, head teachers, or simply classroom teachers that have the experience or understanding to assist others with implementation. If the leaders demonstrate Kouzes and Posner’s (2007) principals without the positional power, they are a peer leader and their experience would be a valuable addition to the body of research.

Studies looking specifically at external coaches’ experiences working with several school districts and the SWPBS program, would expand the knowledge base for leadership and
SWPBS. External coaches are a part of the state system of support of implementation and subject to the nature of the state budgeting process. It is critical that information pertaining to their role within school buildings is gathered and reported to support their continued work. Experiences of the external coaches and perhaps the experiences of a broader spectrum of those working with them would help paint the picture of what they do and how they do it. In addition, quantitative research surrounding the impact of an external coach’s support would be a useful addition to the body of literature.

Finally, cultural rating scales and surveys could be completed of faculty and staff before, during, and after implementing SWPBS to determine the level of change the program causes within a school. SWPBS have been found to improve the overall culture and environment of the elementary, middle, and high school buildings (Caldarella et al., 2011; Chitiyo et al., 2012; Fallon et al., 2012; Kelm & McIntosh, 2011). However, continued data collection and monitoring of the impact this program has on culture is helpful as implementation increases at a variety of levels. In addition to quantitative surveys, qualitative inquiry, and data collection to support results would create a richer understanding of the impact of the program on the culture from different perspectives.

Summary

This study was designed to investigate the lived experiences of SWPBS coaches in central Pennsylvania public elementary schools. The research, theory, and procedures building to the data collection methods support the words they spoke and the picture of the experiences they painted. The management of the complexities of a program with many moving parts is entrusted to these professionals and many barriers can stop the system of cogs from moving. One of the largest pieces the coaches shared was the need and difficulties of staff buy-in. The
necessity to have a certain number of staff on board to make the program successful is a difficult and critical part of the program. If that important piece of the program does not move, the entire implementation can be brought to a halt.

This study also allowed for both practical and theoretical applications of the SWPBS program to be examined. The ability to examine coaches’ experiences in the light of leadership and behavioral theories allows not only the practical application to emerge, but also understand the reasons why a program such as this works. The leadership must guide and maintain it, while making sure it is implemented with fidelity by all involved. SWPBS coaches are required to work collaboratively, work as a leader, work without authority at times, and work a professional position, all with large barriers inhibiting their progress. It is critical that those who can support a coach do so diligently. It is not an easy job, but it is a rewarding one.
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December 21, 2015

Kimberlie B. Rieffannacht

Dear Kimberlie,

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,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

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Appendix B: Recruitment Letter to School-Wide Positive Behavior Coaches

Date:
To: (Name of School Wide Positive Behavior Support Coach)
As a graduate student in the College of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as a part of the requirements for a doctorate in Education. The purpose of my research is to understand the lived experiences of School Wide Positive Behavior Support Coaches during implementation, and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

If you are or were a School Wide Positive Behavior Support coach within a school that has been recognized by the state of Pennsylvania as implementing with fidelity, and are willing to participate, you will be asked to complete a face-to-face interview, participate in a digital bulletin board discussion group and write a letter to a perspective or new School Wide Positive Behavior Support Coach offering advice and information regarding implementation. It should take you no more than three hour for you to complete the procedures listed. Your participation will be completely confidential and no personal or identifying information will be shared.

To participate, please sign and return the attached consent form via e-mail within 5 days and have a signed copy with you when we complete the interview. I will be contacting you to schedule the face-to-face interview upon receipt of the e-mail.

If you choose to participate, you will receive a token of appreciation at the completion of the three components.

Sincerely,

Kimberlie B. Rieffannacht
Graduate Student
Appendix C: Informed Consent Form for School Wide Positive Behavior Support Coaches

Informed Consent Form
Put Me In Coach: A Transcendental Phenomenological Study Examining School Wide Positive Behavior Support Coaches’ Experience with Program Implementation
Kimberlie B. Rieffannacht
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of the lived experiences of School Wide Positive Behavior Support Coaches. You were selected as a possible participant because your school has been recognized by the state of Pennsylvania as a school that is implementing the program with fidelity. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Kimberlie B. Rieffannacht, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to understand the lived experiences of school level, School Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) Coaches during the implementation of the SWPBS program.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:
1. Complete a face-to-face interview with me. This interview will take place at a mutually agreed upon place and time. This interview will be conducted using a set of standardized open-ended questions and will take approximately forty-five minutes to an hour to complete. This interview will be audio recorded for transcription and analysis purposes. The interview will be confidential and your identity will not be disclosed.
2. Participate in a weeklong bulletin board focus group that will take place electronically on Edmodo.com. Each participant will be asked to create or use a free Edmodo.com account, an online platform designed for interactions and discussion boards, to interact on prepared discussion boards with open-ended questions about the phenomenon. Those participating in the bulletin board focus group will be asked to create a confidential screen name and not to reveal identifying details about themselves or schools they are working in. There will be four questions, one per day, with requests to reply to the other participants in the group. This should take no more than 20 minutes per day for 5 days (questions posted on days one through four and day five will be utilized to complete responses to the other participants if necessary).
3. Create a letter addressed to a new School Wide Positive Behavior Support Coach outlining advice or important information that may help them with the implementation process. This letter will be created for the purpose of the study and will be confidential.
Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:
The risks involved in this study are minimal and are no more than the participant would encounter in everyday life.

The benefits to participation includes being able to interact with others who have served in the role of School Wide Positive Behavior Support Coach through the collaborative focus group discussion board and possibly use the information gained to aide others in implementing the SWPBS program with fidelity.

Compensation:
You will not be compensated in any way for 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 participant. Research records will be stored securely in a locked cabinet to which only the researcher will have access.

All data will be stored digitally on a password-protected computer that only I, the researcher, will be able to access. The study includes a bulletin board focus group where every effort to enhance confidentiality will be taken; however, what is shared on that board cannot be controlled by the researcher. The confidentiality of the other members of the bulletin board focus group cannot be guaranteed. Records, data, recordings, and all information will be kept for a period of three years following the completion of the study. At that time, all data and notes will be shredded, and recordings destroyed.

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 by email at krieffannacht@liberty.edu. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from bulletin board focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Bulletin board 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 from the study.

Contacts and Questions:
The researcher conducting this study is Kimberlie B. Rieffannacht. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at 717-250-6038 or kriefannacht@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher’s faculty advisor Dr. Gail Collins, at glcollins2@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.

☐ 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: Audit Trail

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 21, 2015</td>
<td>Received IRB Approval to Conduct Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 3, 2016</td>
<td>Reached out to Pilot Study Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 11, 2016</td>
<td>Conduct Pilot Study Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 19, 2016</td>
<td>Conduct Second Pilot Study Interview Adjust my own approach to giving questions (excluding ALL dialog from myself during interview process).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 19, 2016</td>
<td>Complete First Co- Researcher Interview after school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 20, 2016</td>
<td>Complete Second &amp; Third Co-Researcher Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 22 – 24, 2016</td>
<td>Transcribe Interviews One through Three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 26, 2016</td>
<td>Completed Pilot Study Focus Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 28, 2016</td>
<td>Complete Fourth &amp; Fifth Co-Researcher Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 29, 2016</td>
<td>Complete Sixth Co-Researcher Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 29 – 30, 2016</td>
<td>Transcribe Interviews Three through Six</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2, 2016</td>
<td>Complete Seventh through Tenth Co-Researcher Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 3, 2016</td>
<td>Complete Eleventh Co-Researcher Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 5 – 7, 2016</td>
<td>Complete Transcription of Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 8 – 12, 2016</td>
<td>Bulletin Board Focus Group Conducted on Edmodo.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 10, 2016</td>
<td>E-mailed co-researchers to encourage continued and frequent participation in bulletin board focus group on Edmodo.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 12 – 16, 2016</td>
<td>Complete compiling the data, collect all prompt responses from e-mail and begin coding and identifying themes. Write chapter 4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 21, 2016</td>
<td>Write Chapter 5 and Submit draft to Dr. Collins for review.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E: Epoch Journaling

Date: 1-19-16  
Research Actions: First Interviews  
Personal Experiences: I am working with the assumption that those being interviewed are interested in the program and do not mind talking about it at length. I am also assuming that the interviewer will be honest and willing to share real experiences. I also have had positive experiences with the program.  
Possible Bias: The bias is not to judge if the information the coaches give me, even if it is negative. I also have to ensure that I am not judging the reaction, methods or perceptions of the program that differ from my own.  
Actions Moving Forward: Keeping my personal opinions and thoughts about the different approaches to myself will be key through the face-to-face interview process. I need to keep my facial expressions and comments to myself.

Date: 1-20-16  
Research Actions: Interview  
Personal Experiences: As I have worked up to my third interview I have to resist the urge to compare the interview responses in my head and the differences in different programs.  
Possible Bias: I have to continue to ensure that I am not judging reaction, methods or perceptions of the program that differ from my own.  
Actions Moving Forward: I have to continue to keep my personal opinions and thoughts about the different approaches to myself will be key through the face-to-face interview process. I need to keep my facial expressions and comments to myself.

Date: 1-28-16  
Research Actions: Interviews  
Personal Experiences: I have two interviews today and I will be interested in hearing not only about their experience with implementation but how they have kept the program going as long as they have, since they are from a neighboring school that is known for using the program for a long time and doing it well.  
Possible Bias: I have to continue to resist the impulse to engage in a discussion to benefit my own application of the program in my school.  
Actions Moving Forward: Moving forward I will resist the urge to have my voice or person questions be heard and focus on what the co-research has to say, as it is their experience I am after.

Date: 2-2-16  
Research Actions: Interviews  
Personal Experiences: I have four interviews scheduled today in a district I am not very familiar with.  
Possible Bias: I have to continue to resist the impulse to engage in a discussion to benefit my own application of the program in my school.
**Actions Moving Forward:** Moving forward I will resist the urge to have my voice or person questions be heard and focus on what the co-research has to say, as it is their experience I am after.

**Date:** 2-13-16

**Research Actions:** Coding/Theming

**Personal Experiences:** I have completed all my data collection and I am beginning to analyze data.

**Possible Bias:** I have to continue to resist moving the data around in an attempt to get what I think the answers to the research questions should be. The researchers have shared their experience and that is what I am responsible for honoring.

**Actions Moving Forward:** Moving forward I will only use what is read and look at each piece of data in its entirety and not move to get the wording how I think it should be.
## Appendix F: Enumeration Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open-Codes</th>
<th>Enumeration of open-code appearance across data sets</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer not an Administrator</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Lack of Positional Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Support</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lack of Positional Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource (Physical)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Physical Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrations Planning/Resources</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Physical Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team support</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Building a Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picking members of the team</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Building a Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate Unit Consultants</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Building a Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency of Implementation</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Consistency and Common Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Teaching</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Consistency and Common Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Framing Redirection</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Positive Framing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Response</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Positive Framing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reward/Acknowledge</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Faculty &amp; Staff Buy-In</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Buy-in</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Faculty &amp; Staff Buy-In</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Time Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Times</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Time Resources</td>
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Appendix G: Sample of Data Analysis Coding Template

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<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Listening to your staff is also important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>communicate with your staff and try to get everyone on board with the program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>teachers to buy into what you’re trying to accomplish, it needs to be sincere, and come across that way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Reach out and have discussion with folks who are on board and those who aren’t. Include both on your team also so you hear all voices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>It’s systemic change that will meet a combination of enthusiasm and reluctance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>barriers at the beginning was teacher buy-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>How am I going to do this in the classroom with all these other things I have to do and so really helping the staff understand what their role was and what they had to do to ensure that people were buy-in. The teacher buy-in because now it has kind of become an everyday thing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>How do we continue to promote buy-in at this stage in the game. We are kind of really kind of bought in. That is kind of overall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>obviously it didn’t go over, everyone didn’t welcome it with loving arms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>barriers mainly were the buy-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>People were all about, it is not about buy-in anymore. People still say that, but people for the most part, this is the way we do things you know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>I think people are pretty much on board with it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Everybody could get used to this is what I have to do and then we add this in and this in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>I would say in the beginning I would say buy-in. Also there are people who buy-in but just don’t give out the stuff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Because they had input in what the celebrations were, and what we should sell in the school store, I think that helped change their attitude and the excitement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>agree the buy-in is the most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Teacher buy-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>buy-in from our bus driver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Anytime you have anything new, there is going to be resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>It is like when you first get started, you got to get everyone on board, that is hard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>We have tried some staff incentives to get these teachers on board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>going to pass them out and then from those we are going to pull a staff members name</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Above is an example screenshot of my coding and transcription of data. Color-coding, spreadsheet tabs and multiple monitors assisted in the process.