SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENTING SCHOOL-WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT IN ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSROOMS

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SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN EDUCATION AT NORTHERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

June 14, 2011

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DATE: June 16, 2011
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Abstract

Student problem behaviors are a challenge in schools. The purpose of this literature review is to examine one approach to dealing with problem behaviors in a positive, proactive manner. This proactive approach is the implementation of school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) in elementary and middle schools across the United States. Research indicates SWPBS to be successful at reducing student problem behavior in schools when looking at office discipline referral rates. Further study is needed to determine the effects of SWPBS in terms of in school suspension rates and out-of-school suspension rates.
Chapter I: Introduction

Teachers are faced with challenges even before they begin to educate students. Not only are teachers responsible for teaching the core academic subjects such as reading, math, science, and social studies, but teachers are also presented with nonacademic challenges that influence their instruction (Lassen, Steele, & Sailor, 2006). An increasing amount of young students are entering school without the social, emotional, behavioral, and academic skills needed to be successful (Hemmeter, Fox, Jack, & Broyles, 2007). Student problem behavior often interferes with the education of students, leads to teacher burnout, and occupies administrative time (Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010). Proactive and preventative approaches can be effective solutions when dealing with challenging behavior in schools (Lassen et al., 2006). One model of a proactive approach to student problem behavior, school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS), incorporates many evidence-based interventions. The challenge schools face is determining what makes the implementation of school-wide positive behavior support successful. If teachers are not able to manage student behavior in the classrooms, valuable instructional time is wasted (Reinke, Splett, Robeson, & Offutt, 2009). Schools need to work collaboratively toward providing a positive environment in which all students can learn and thrive.

Background

Recent events such as school violence and delinquency in the United States are a cause of public concern (Pelham et al., 2005). “With respect to extreme management issues such as school violence, a recent report (U.S. Department of Education, 2008) indicated that 1 in 10 American schools had at least one serious violent crime in the previous school year; 57% reported that one or more incidents of violence resulted in police involvement” (Lewis, Powers,
Kelk, & Newcomer, 2002, p. 181). Youth with early behavior problems have an increased risk for academic failure, substance abuse, peer rejection, and delinquency (Reinke et al., 2009). Problem behaviors such as these emphasize the importance of improving emotional and social development in schoolchildren. Youth involved in aggressive behavior in early childhood are at higher risk for conduct disorder, depression, anxiety, and antisocial behavior in their adolescent years. Disruptive behavior in the classroom needs immediate attention because the consequences of problem behaviors are well-known.

Past practice has been to increase the amount and intensity of punitive disciplinary procedures when schools address challenging behavior (Lassen et al., 2006). Examples include expelling and suspending students, hiring security officers, adopting zero tolerance policies, and putting students in alternative educational facilities. Further examination is needed to determine the effectiveness of such approaches, and some research even suggests that strategies like these can increase problem behavior (Lassen et al., 2006).

On the contrary, an increasing amount of research supports the use of proactive and preventative approaches when addressing problematic behavior in schools (Lassen et al., 2006). School-wide positive behavior support programs (SWPBS) emphasize proactive and preventative approaches rather than reactive and punitive methods (Ervin, Schaugency, Matthews, Goodman, & McGlinchey, 2007). At the federal level, efforts have been made to improve the climate of schools by focusing on a proactive disciplinary approach, setting clear student expectations, and supporting proper behavior. Other intervention reviews also found monitoring behavior and positive reinforcement to be effective in improving behavior (Lassen et al., 2006; McIntosh, Filter, Bennett, Ryan, & Sugai, 2010).
Statement of the Problem

To provide the best possible education, students need to be taught in an environment in which they feel safe, know what to expect, and are free from distractions. Schools need to reduce off-task behavior to utilize instructional time most effectively. Positive reinforcement is shown to affect student behavior and academics positively. According to researcher and theorist B. F. Skinner, and the reinforcement theory, behavior reinforced is posited to be repeated. Behavior not reinforced is less likely to be repeated (Boeree, 2006).

Knowing that good behavior is strengthened by positive reinforcement, schools need to take a proactive approach to dealing with challenging behavior. Incorporating SWPBS is one proactive approach. A study of the components necessary for the successful implementation of school-wide positive behavior support in elementary and middle schools is essential. Staff, parents, and students need to work together to reach the most promising outcome for all involved. The best manner to get all groups actively engaged with the effort is yet to be determined. This paper focuses on finding methods used to successfully implement SWPBS in elementary and middle schools.

Research Questions

What makes the implementation of school-wide positive behavior support successful in elementary and middle school classrooms?

How can schools engage staff and students in the school-wide positive behavior support effort?
Definition of Terms

Positive Behavior Support (PBS). “[A]n approach to dealing with challenging behavior that incorporates many evidence-based methods…the components of school-wide applications of PBS include the following: establishment of a planning team, definition of school-wide behavioral expectations, teaching of behavioral expectations directly to students, development of procedures for acknowledging appropriate behaviors and discouraging inappropriate behavior, and monitoring and ongoing evaluation of relevant outcomes” (Lassen et al., 2006, p. 702).

School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS). “[T]he school systems-level application of Positive Behavior Support” (McIntosh et al., 2010, p. 6).

Positive reinforcement. “[H]as occurred when three conditions have been met: a consequence is presented dependent on a behavior, the behavior becomes more likely to occur, and the behavior becomes more likely to occur because and only because the consequence is presented dependent on the behavior” (Athabasca University, Centre for Psychology [AUCP], 2010, p. 2).

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB Act). “[I]s a United States Act of Congress concerning the education of children in public schools…NCLB supports standards-based education reform, which is based on the belief that setting high standards and establishing measurable goals can improve individual outcomes in education. The Act requires states to develop assessments in basic skills to be given to all students in certain grades, if those states are to receive federal funding for schools. The Act does not assert a national achievement standard; standards are set by each individual state” (Wikipedia, 2011).
Chapter II: Literature Review

Positive behavior support plans can be effective at improving student behavior and academic achievement. Further study is needed to determine the elements that make school-wide positive behavior support most successful in elementary and middle school classrooms. The following studies will examine what makes SWPBS succeed.

Implementing School-Wide Positive Behavior Support

Even with support from the federal or state government, educational change has been limited over the past 25 years. Studies show that implementing new educational programs nationwide has been a challenge (Childs, Kincaid, & George, 2010; George, White, & Schlaffer, 2007). The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB Act) of 2001 and other legislation demand an increase in student achievement and improved student behavior. Former President George W. Bush stated about the NCLB Act in January of 2001, “These reforms express my deep belief in our public schools and their mission to build the mind and character of every child, from every background, in every part of America” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). The goal of the NCLB Act is not only to increase students’ academic achievement in America, but also to provide a safe educational experience and instill character in students. One of the components of the NCLB Act is to hold schools accountable for providing safe, drug-free schools. The NCLB Act requires states to provide school safety reports to the public. The NCLB Act also protects administrators, teachers, and other school employees from lawsuits when they take reasonable actions to keep order and use discipline in the schools. The NCLB Act requires schools to develop school safety plans that include security, discipline, prevention, student codes of conduct, and a crisis management plan (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). These requirements of the NCLB Act have a domino effect: the NCLB Act holds schools accountable
for providing a safe and academically sound experience for America’s students, and in turn
schools hold students accountable for their behavior. School-wide positive behavior support is an
approach to help reach the desired outcomes in schools that former President George W. Bush
had envisioned with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Schools that are successful with implementing school-wide positive behavior support
target three levels of intervention: Tier 1 (primary), Tier 2 (secondary), and Tier 3 (tertiary)
(George, White, & Schlaffer, 2007). Interventions at the primary level meet the behavioral and
social needs of the majority of the student body. Students at the primary intervention level come
to school with the educational skills they need, and the primary interventions are to develop,
directly teach, and reinforce several positively stated school rules. Primary interventions are
considered “universal” because they apply to all students in the school (George et al., 2007).

Secondary interventions are targeted at a smaller percentage of the student population
who are considered at risk and need more assistance beyond primary interventions. These
students do not respond sufficiently to the primary interventions. Interventions at the secondary
level include mentoring programs, tutoring, and social skills instruction (George et al., 2007).

The small remainder of the student body receives tertiary interventions when the primary
level and secondary level interventions are not enough. These students have relentless behavior
problems that require specialized attention. Tertiary interventions are individualized to students’
circumstances and needs, and they take more time to implement (George et al., 2007).

A randomized, wait-list controlled, effectiveness analysis of school-wide positive
behavior support was conducted by Horner et al. (2009) to focus on four research questions: “(a)
 fidelity of SWPBS primary prevention practices used within elementary schools, (b) improved
levels of perceived safety in the schools, (c) reduced levels of reported ODRs, and (d) the
proportion of third graders who meet or exceed the state reading achievement standard” (Horner et al., 2009). The study was done in elementary (K-5) schools in Hawaii and Illinois between 2002 and 2006. The schools were chosen for the study based on the state’s ability to give whole-school team training in SWPBS, school administrators nominating their schools, and school staff not having been trained in SWPBS in the past. The first 30 schools in Illinois and in Hawaii that responded and met the criteria became part of the study. The 30 schools from each state were assigned at random to either a “Control/Delayed” group or a “Treatment” group. The 30 schools in the treatment group, 15 from each state, received SWPBS training at Time 1 (T1) of the study. The 30 schools in the Control/Delay group received SWPBS training at Time 2 (T2), a year later into the study.

Several schools left the study throughout; the project was left with 23 schools in the Control/Delay group and 30 schools in the Treatment group at the final evaluation. All schools, regardless of how long they participated in the study, were included in the data analysis to reduce bias (Horner et al., 2009). The average enrollment of the schools in the Treatment group was 440.3 students, and the schools in the Control/Delay group had an average enrollment of 547.8 students. The student population in the Treatment group consisted of the following average percentages: 0.2% American Indian, 38.1% Asian or Pacific Islander, 24.1% Black, 9.0% Hispanic, and 27.6% White. The student population in the Control/Delay group consisted of the following average percentages: 0.4% American Indian, 34.2% Asian or Pacific Islander, 34.1% Black, 13.1% Hispanic, and 18.2% White. Approximately 50% of the students in the Treatment group, and about 58.6% of students in the Control/Delay group, received free or reduced-price lunch. About 12.5% of students in the Treatment group, and about 12.8% of students in the Control/Delay group, had IEPs (Horner et al., 2009).
The design of the study was a randomized, wait-list control effectiveness trial. T1 was the first measurement prior to any training, T2 was when training was started with the Treatment group but not the Control/Delay group, and T3 was after all schools started SWPBS training (Horner et al., 2009). The implementation of SWPBS was measured by the School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET) to determine the extent schools were implementing Tier 1 strategies.

Seven areas of SWPBS were measured by the 28 items on the SET. The seven areas included: (a) defining behavioral expectations, (b) teaching behavioral expectations to students, (c) rewarding students for positive behavior, (d) delivering predictable consequences to students for misbehavior, (e) systematically collecting data and using data for making decisions, (f) administration supporting positive behavior, and (g) district-level supporting positive behavior.

The SET had an overall total score between 0 and 100%, in addition to individual scores between 0 and 100% for the seven areas examined. At the start of the study, a school was considered to be implementing SWPBS with a total score of 80% or higher (Horner et al., 2009).

The perceived school safety was measured by the School Safety Survey (SSS) by rating five or more individuals in different school roles (an administrator, a supervisory staff member, a classified staff member, and a teacher). The SSS gave two scores, a Risk Factor score and a Protective Factor score. The Risk Factor score had 17 areas including: “(a) design of space; (b) crowding; (c) perceived caring; (d) perceived sensitivity to cultural differences; (e) student bonding with school; (f) the quality of student–adult interactions, perceived fairness of school rules; and (g) level of adult supervision” (Horner et al., 2009). Higher scores suggested higher levels of behavioral risk. The Protective Factor score had 16 areas including: “(a) school climate, (b) clarity of behavioral expectations, (c) perception that all students are included in the school, (d) student perception of identification with the school, (e) student participation, (f) opportunities
for student skill acquisition, and (g) formal and predictable systems for conflict resolution” (Horner et al., 2009). Higher scores suggested higher protection from behavioral risk factors.

The level of problem behavior was measured by the number of office discipline referrals using the School-wide Information System (SWIS). A “SWIS Facilitator” at the district-level gave school staff technical support, direct training on SWIS, and direct training on data use for decision making. Academic achievement was measured by state standardized tests. In this study the data measured was the third grade students’ performance on the state reading assessments. Hawaii used version nine of the Stanford Achievement Test, and Illinois used the Illinois State Achievement Test (Horner et al., 2009).

State employees with state resources conducted all direct contact with the schools. Prior to any SWPBS training (T1), all schools in the study recorded their current level of SWPBS implementation, academic achievement, and school safety data. However, none of the schools included the number of office discipline referrals in their initial data records. The number of initial ODRs in each school would have been very beneficial in this study. The number of initial ODRs would have helped to determine the effect SWPBS implementation had on student behavior. The number of ODRs was a common measurement amongst other studies on SWPBS implementation, and it would have been useful in this study as well.

Schools in the Treatment group received SWPBS training and support. During a two-year period, teams from each school attended three or four trainings that lasted one to two days each. Formerly trained state employees instructed the PBS teams. The initial year of training focused on: (a) building staff commitment to SWPBS, (b) developing the team and management systems, (c) creating a process to identify, teach, monitor, and acknowledge three to five school-wide behavior expectations, (d) creating consequences for misbehavior, and (e) applying SWIS to
collect, summarize, and use data to make decisions. Local coaches were selected for each
district, and the coaches met with the teams each month to provide support. During the meetings
PBS teams reviewed their implementation self-assessment checklists and outcome data (number
of ODRs) to plan and make decisions (Horner et al., 2009).

During the study, policy changed in Hawaii. Hawaii’s Control/Delay schools’ training
between T2 and T3 was given by district personnel in two to three days rather than by state
trainers. These schools in Hawaii did not receive the full training that other schools did.
However, the focus of this study was on the first year of PBS implementation. The study was set
to examine the extent school staff could implement SWPBS in the schools. The School-wide
Evaluation Tool (SET), which determines the extent schools are implementing Tier 1 SWPBS,
was the primary dependent variable. In the first analysis, the Treatment schools improved .328
more than the Control/Delay schools from T1 to T2. The Treatment schools’ scores on the 28
SET items improved significantly more than the Control/Delay schools’ scores immediately after
training and after one year (p < .01). A similar phenomenon occurred for the Hawaiian schools
with significant difference (p < .01) between the Treatment and Control/Delay group SET scores
even after all schools implemented SWPBS (Horner et al., 2009).

The SET data showed that schools that were not implementing SWPBS at the beginning
of the study, but that received the training and technical support needed to implement SWPBS
and did so with fidelity, were perceived as safer environments. Schools implementing SWPBS
were also associated with increased third grade reading scores, but this determination needed
further study. The schools implementing SWPBS also reported lower than average levels of
problem behavior in terms of office discipline referrals. The Treatment group’s office discipline
referrals per 100 students per school day at T2 were .290 and at T3 was .360. The Control/Delay
group at T3 was .340. The SWIS national database showed that the mean ODR rate per 100 students per school day for 1,010 elementary schools was .37. However, this finding could not be associated with the implementation of SWPBS because ODR data was not collected prior to the study. Horner et al. (2009) suggested that there was the potential to increase students’ social competency, students’ academic achievement, and the amount of time and resources needed to deal with misbehavior. SWPBS was a way to do so.

Characteristics of School-Wide Positive Behavior Support

George et al. (2007) researched two schools that successfully implemented school-wide positive behavior support in terms of student behavior. The first school, Centennial School of Lehigh University, was in Bethlehem Pennsylvania. This school provided special education programs and other services for students classified as autistic or emotionally disturbed under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004. The approximately 100 students at Centennial School ranged in age from six years old to 21 years old. Ninety-three percent of the students were labeled as having an emotional disturbance. The school population included students who were 76% Caucasian, 13% African American, and 11% Hispanic American. Free or reduced-price lunch was provided to 82% of the students.

Students were sent to Centennial School from about 40 local school districts when multidisciplinary teams decided that the school districts these students were in were not capable of dealing with their challenging behaviors. In 1998, Centennial School implemented a school-wide positive behavior support model that had three tiers of intervention: universal, selected, and tertiary. The result of the SWPBS was a large reduction in antisocial behavior. Physical restraint situations occurred 122 times during the first 20 days of school, and after implementing a year of
SWPBS there were no incidences of physical restraint needed during the last 20 days of school. The only two isolation time-out rooms were also able to be closed by the end of the school year.

Teachers were very satisfied with the results of the SWPBS implementation at Centennial School. Teacher interviews showed that teachers felt the interventions had positive student outcomes, and they were willing to commit to using SWPBS the following year. Teacher and staff commitment to SWPBS continued, and nine years later the school continued to see decreased student antisocial behavior and increased pro-social behavior. Centennial School was one of the few alternative schools in the country that had SWPBS implemented at all three levels of intervention.

The second school George et al. (2007) studied was Northwest Elementary School in Eastern Pennsylvania. The city’s population was about 25,000, and the city faced less tax income because the steel industry failed. Located in a high-crime downtown area, Northwest Elementary School was one of five in the district. The school had about 550 students in first through fifth grade. The student population consisted of students who were 48% Caucasian, 47% Hispanic, 3% African American, and 1% Asian. Free or reduced-price lunch was provided to 67% of the students.

During the baseline year, Northwest Elementary School had numerous instances of behavior problems which were documented by 1,717 office discipline referrals and 845 after-school detentions. The school lacked support from the community, evident by no parents attending the school’s first open house in the fall (even after flyers and letters were sent out to advertise the event) (George et al., 2007).

The same year, a new principal at Northwest Elementary School started to implement PBS in the cafeteria. The cafeteria was the most disordered area of the school, as determined by
school staff. PBS implementation included creating clear cafeteria expectations, and then directly teaching and modeling the expectations by school staff. The students then practiced the expectations. To support students who followed the rules, tokens were given out and could be used as money in the school store. Staff at Northwest Elementary School found the initial PBS effort to have immediate success because it helped to reinstate respectful behavior in the cafeteria. The positive behavioral change evident in the cafeteria was a step toward school-wide positive behavior support that was implemented the next year. Before school started, teachers received two-day training on the SWPBS and organized resources for individualized student interventions. SWPBS at Northwest Elementary School included the following components:

(a) clearly defined rules and expectations across the various school settings, (b) direct teaching of the rules and expectations, (c) a gradation of consequences for rule-violating behavior, (d) heightened recognition of students’ appropriate behaviors by school faculty, (e) special incentives, (f) the use of data for decision making, and (g) consistent follow-through on the part of school staff (George et al., 2007).

After the first year of PBS implementation, PBS had a positive effect on student behavior at Northwest Elementary School. The number of office discipline referrals decreased from the baseline year by 1,015 – from 1,717 to 702. The number of after-school detentions also dropped by 760 from the previous year – from 845 to 85. After the second year of PBS implementation, the number of office discipline referrals decreased to 619. The number of after-school detentions also decreased to 21 (George et al., 2007).

The implementation of SWPBS also had a positive impact on the behavior of students with Individual Education Programs (IEPs). During the first year of PBS implementation, there were 57 students with IEPS that were responsible for 338 after-school detentions, 298 office
discipline referrals, 19 days of in-school suspension, and 5 days of out of school suspension. 
These numbers decreased during the second year of PBS implementation with 26 IEP students responsible for two after-school detentions, 34 office discipline referrals, three days of in-school suspension, and five days of out of school suspension. A year after PBS implementation, 450 families attended the first open house of the school year compared to zero families in attendance the previous year.

George et al. (2007) noted that Northwest Elementary School’s principal believed the increase in the open house attendance was in part because school staff focused their contact with families on positive, supportive topics to help students be successful. This was a change from previous negative family contacts that focused on discipline due to poor behavior in school.

Centennial School of Lehigh University and Northwest Elementary School were compared by George et al (2007) to find similarities between them and to determine factors for successful PBS implementation. The first factor focused on leadership. The school leaders had a reason and vision for change. They were not satisfied to leave the schools as they were. Support was given from administrators to plan, organize, inform, mentor, motivate, and team build throughout the PBS implementation process.

Another factor found to contribute to successful PBS implementation was the diversity of school-wide teams. PBS teams were composed of administrators, specialists, school psychologists, teachers, and instructional assistants. The administrators saw the need for change, conducted initial PBS research, and created the support necessary to implement PBS in the schools. The teachers modeled PBS expectations in the classrooms and carried out the school rules and expectations. Teachers worked directly with students on a daily basis to implement PBS. The school psychologists changed their roles from disciplining students after problem
behaviors occurred to working toward problem prevention. School psychologists spent more

time in classrooms doing observations and conferring with teachers. They also provided school

staff with professional development opportunities that examined students’ behavior progress and

used the data to make instructional decisions. All PBS team members worked together for the

common goal of successfully implementing PBS (George et al., 2007).

A third factor toward successful PBS implementation was school-wide agreements.

Schools had clear expectations and rules that consisted of the following: be ready for class, be

responsible, be respectful, observe personal space (hands and feet), and follow directions. The

rules were specific to each setting in the school, meaning cafeteria rules were different from

library rules. Another school-wide agreement was that decisions in the school were data-driven.

Positive behavior was recognized by rewards such as awards ceremonies, money for school

stores, and verbal praise. Consequences were consistent for behaviors that broke school rules

(George et al., 2007).

A fourth factor found to aid successful PBS implementation was class-wide interventions.

All teachers in the school needed to commit to the PBS effort. Teachers needed to review

expectations, focus on positive behavior and openly acknowledge it in class, give students

private warnings for misbehavior, and provide time-out opportunities for students to regain focus

and composure (George et al., 2007).

Both Centennial School of Lehigh University and Northwest Elementary School had

interventions in place for teachers to implement before sending students to the office. Although

the interventions at the schools were not exactly the same, both schools’ interventions had

orderly steps for the teachers to use when faced with low-level misbehavior. The interventions

were likely different because of the varying needs of the schools’ populations. Different
interventions were necessary to meet the needs of the autistic and emotionally impaired students at Centennial School of Lehigh University, in comparison to the interventions best suited for the first through fifth grade population of Northwest Elementary School (George et al., 2007).

Teachers at Centennial School of Lehigh University used the following steps for interventions: (a) at the start of every class, teachers orally reviewed class expectations with the students, (b) students who followed the class expectations were publically recognized by the teacher, (c) students who did not follow the class expectations were given reminders in private, (d) if an activity became frustrating for students, they had the option to take time away from that activity, (e) students who continued to violate class expectations were given additional private warnings, (f) students were sent to problem solving (George et al., 2007). (Problem solving was a four-step process that included identifying the problem, identifying a replacement activity, making a plan, and committing to the plan. Problem solving let students try to quickly solve the issues and get back to their classroom instead of going to the office for an office discipline referral.)

Northwest Elementary School had similar intervention steps in place for low-level misbehavior. Teacher followed the following steps: (a) at the start of every class, teachers orally reviewed class expectations with the students, (b) students who followed the class expectations were publically recognized by the teacher, (c) students who did not follow the class expectations were given reminders in private, (d) students who continued to misbehave were told to get colored cards from a chart in the room (The colored cards represented various levels of misbehavior. Green cards were taken by students who received first-time warnings, yellow cards were taken for second-time warnings, and red cards meant students had to leave the classroom. This color card system replaced a previous practice of teachers writing names on the board.), (e)
students who received red cards and had to leave the room then reported to a “buddy teacher” (The buddy teacher was another teacher at the school who acted as the student’s mentor. The buddy teacher worked with the student to problem solve for the student’s misbehavior. If the problem solving was a success, the student went back to class. If the problem solving failed to work, or the student continued to misbehave in class, the student was sent to the office. Students found to display serious or dangerous misbehavior, as determined by the classroom teachers, were sent directly to the office.) (George et al., 2007).

The multilayered class-wide interventions provided students with a discipline system in which all students knew the school rules and expectations, and teachers used similar enforcement procedures. Students received direct instruction of appropriate behavior through daily reviews, modeling, and positive reinforcement. Students also had several chances to stay on task and in class through private reminders and visual prompts. A purpose of this intervention system for low-level misbehavior was to keep students in the classroom and focused on learning. This intervention system was also designed to keep low-level misbehavior from becoming more serious forms of behavior. When used school-wide in all classrooms, this intervention system showed students and parents that the school valued students’ time on task and in class, and the intervention system provided a fair way of doing so.

Resources were another factor suggested to help successfully implement PBS in schools. School staff, including administrators, specialists, school psychologists, teachers, and instructional assistants need training on PBS implementation. School staff needed time to learn and practice the new skills before they could properly implement them. They also needed feedback and time to plan and share with other colleges (George et al., 2007).
A final resource George et al. (2007) suggested to contribute to successful PBS implementation was organizational restructuring. Organizational restructuring included reviewing school handbooks to make sure they agreed with school-wide plans. Organizational restructuring also included altering positions for school counselors and school psychologists so they were used where they were most needed in the school to help implement PBS. Organizational restructuring also included defining rules for when to implement tertiary interventions.

George et al. (2007) concluded that there was a definite need for change in the schools. Change could have come at a small or large scale, but it started when something was not working as well as it could have been and knowing there were ways to do it better. The change needed at Centennial School of Lehigh University and Northwest Elementary School affected overall practices at the schools. It started with a vision by the schools’ administrators and grew into something greater: the successful implementation of school-wide positive behavior support systems.

**Methods Used to Evaluate PBS Implementation**

During a separate study, in an effort to increase Florida’s school districts’ participation in positive behavior support programs, the Florida Department of Education funded the state’s PBS Project (Childs et al., 2010). The goal was to get more schools implementing PBS at all three levels of intervention. The participation of Florida public schools in this training was voluntary. Over 300 schools at various levels including pre kindergarten, elementary school, middle school, high school, and alternative/center schools were included. Between 2004 and 2007 school teams were trained by Project staff after committing to implementing Tier 1 PBS in their districts. Active participation of school administration was found to be an important part of the Tier 1
training. The training lasted three days and included lectures, team activities, and videos of schools implementing PBS. During the training teams made action plans to help implement PBS in their districts throughout the school year. Components of the Tier 1 PBS training included the following:

Establishing a team, understanding basic behavioral principles, building faculty buy-in, establishing a data-based decision-making system (e.g., including behavioral definitions, behavior tracking forms, coherent discipline referral process, and effective consequences), identifying expectations, establishing rules for specific settings, developing reward systems, and implementing and evaluating the Tier 1/Universal Level PBS system (Childs et al., 2010, p.200).

About 20% of Florida public schools, which was over 500 schools in 42 of the 67 school districts, had been trained in Tier 1 PBS by August 2008.

Various evaluation measures were used to determine the effectiveness of Florida’s PBS Project training. Areas evaluated included student outcomes, activities for implementation, the impact and satisfaction of the training, efforts for technical assistance, and team processes, (Childs et al., 2010). Data were put online twice a year to show evaluation summaries, and the summaries can be viewed at the Florida PBS Project’s website: http://flpbs.fmhi.usf.edu.

One evaluation form, the New School Profile, collected background information about schools before initial training. Information included contact information, demographics, academic data, and behavior. According to Florida’s Positive Behavior Support Project website, academic data included the percentage of students with a disability, Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) results, and Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) oral reading fluency scores for the academic year. Behavior incidence data included
the number of office managed discipline referrals (ODR), the number of days of in school suspension (ISS), and the number of out of school suspensions (OSS) for the academic year. The school’s average daily attendance was also recorded. The information from the New School Profiles was used to determine the differences of PBS implementation in school districts with various backgrounds. The New School Profile gave a baseline to compare data from in behavioral areas (including ODR ISS, and OSS) and academic areas (specifically the FCAT) from the year prior to PBS implementation in the schools throughout the three year study following.

Another form of training evaluation was the School Profile. The School Profile was a form similar to the New School Profile, except it did not request academic or behavior information. (Academic and behavior data was automatically gathered by the Outcome Data Summary at the end of the year.) Schools completed the form every year once they had Tier 1 PBS training (Childs et al., 2010). A 20-question survey known as the Team Process Evaluation measured the effectiveness of the PBS team. There were four categories centering on team building and functioning. They included conflict management, problem solving, communication/distributive leadership, and trust building (Childs et al., 2010). Each PBS team member completed the survey, rating questions from 1 (we never do) to 3 (we sometimes do) to 5 (we always do). The scores of the surveys were averaged to the nearest tenth and put online midyear. All areas of the survey had a state average above 4. The areas with the greatest average scores were “friendly” and “no put downs.” The areas with the lowest average scores were “checks for understanding of concepts,” “summary of outcomes,” and “time limits.” The results of the survey showed areas that needed change to successfully implement PBS.
The Team Process Evaluation focused on the PBS team members’ feelings and opinions related to PBS implementation at the team members’ school. This evaluation was used because of the influence team commitment (including administrators, teachers, and support staff) had on PBS implementation. If the PBS teams were not actively supporting and demonstrating positive behavior support in the schools, then PBS was unlikely to be very successful in terms of behavioral and academic change for students. If there’s no change in students’ behavior and academic performance, then there was no purpose for Florida’s PBS Project’s efforts.

Benchmarks of Quality (BoQ) was another way to evaluate schools implementing Tier 1 PBS. Each spring team members completed the Team Member Rating, and the coach finished the Benchmarks Scoring Form based on a 100-point scale. BoQ was used to look at the extent Tier 1 PBS was being implemented, to seek out exemplary schools, and to develop action plans based on strengths and weaknesses. Scores of 70 or higher on the BoQ were considered high implementers, and scores below 70 were schools with low implementation. Categories on the Benchmarks of Quality include the PBS team, faculty commitment, effective procedures for dealing with discipline, data entry and analysis plan established, expectations and rules developed, reward/recognition program established, lesson plans for teaching expectations/rules, implementation plan, crisis plan, and evaluation (http://flpbs.fmhi.usf.edu/pdfs/Benchmarks%20Scoring%20Form2005.pdf). The BoQ score may not reflect a full year of performance depending on when the school started PBS training. Results were given to the PBS teams and Florida’s Department of Education annually (Childs et al., 2010).

The Outcome Data Summary collected data on behavior referrals such as office discipline referrals, in school suspensions, and out of school suspensions at the end of the year. The
Outcome Data Summary also incorporated attendance records and academic achievement records which included the statewide assessment test known as the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test or FCAT. The PBS team coach completed this form using team input. Only 25 percent of Tier 1 PBS trained schools use the School-Wide Information System known as SWIS (http://www.swis.org/), so continuing data collection and analysis of the Outcome Data Summary is necessary. The results helped to determine the impact of Tier 1 PBS on academics and behaviors (Childs et al., 2010).

Completion of the Outcome Data Summary is voluntary, like the other surveys are. Unfortunately the study does not give statistics on the number of schools participating in the Outcome Data Summary. This information would be extremely beneficial to know to help determine the effects PBS has on student behavior. The School-Wide Implementation Factors (SWIF) survey was taken on the Internet by team members, coaches, and district coordinators that had taken Tier 1 PBS training. SWIF gathered information to help determine the overall satisfaction of those who received Tier 1 PBS training and to plan for future trainings. SWIF measures team members’ attitudes toward PBS and includes administrators, teachers, and support staff. So far 211 people from 91 schools have taken the SWIF survey after implementing PBS in their districts (Childs et al., 2010). Information from the SWIF survey helped to determine how important the attitudes of PBS team members are to the successful implementation of PBS.

Not all schools whose team members received Tier 1 PBS training have continued to implement PBS in their districts. Another Web-based survey, the Attrition Survey, collected information from participants in the Tier 1 PBS training who had discontinued PBS in their schools. The Attrition Survey had a four-point scale that rated items from significantly
contributing to not contributing at all to the lack of continued participation in PBS. Information gathered from the Attrition Survey was used to prevent other PBS training members from discontinuing PBS in the future. Thirty-two people from 18 schools have taken the Attrition Survey so far. Although more data needs to be collected, three areas of concern this study revealed are: “(a) high rates of administrative and staff turnover in schools, (b) lack of time (administrator, team, staff), and (c) lack of commitment (administrator, team, staff)” (Childs et al., 2010, p. 206).

Data were collected at various times throughout the year. Data from the New School Profile was taken a minimum of two weeks before Tier 1 PBS training began. The School Profile, the School Team Update, and the Team Process Evaluation were part of the midyear data collection. They were distributed in the fall and collected by the middle of December each year. By the beginning of January, results from these surveys was known and shared with district coordinators and PBS team coaches. Surveys to collect data from the Benchmarks of Quality and the Outcome Data Summary were distributed in the late spring and collected by the middle of June each year. These end of the year data helped to determine overall outcomes of schools implementing PBS and to plan for future trainings. The SWIF survey was also collected at the end of the year, whereas the Attrition Survey was collected throughout the year as participants discontinued PBS in their schools. District coordinators were also given full evaluation summaries to distribute to district coaches (Childs et al., 2010).

To encourage participation on the surveys, Florida’s PBS Project gave money directly to school districts that completed the surveys. If surveys were finished during the allotted time period, funding was typically $200 for reports in the middle of the year and $600 for reports successfully completed at the end of the year. Schools that did not finish surveys in the middle of
the year could still finish surveys at the end of the year, but they could not receive funding. Schools not actively implementing Tier 1 PBS also could not receive funding. Depending on the grant money available, the amount given to school districts changed (Childs et al., 2010).

Apart from the data collection in the middle of the year and at the end of the year, the PBS Project collected data from the SWIF Survey and the Attrition Survey. All team members participating in the PBS effort were asked to take the SWIF Survey, and the team members were given the opportunity to win one of three $100 prizes determined by a drawing (Childs et al., 2010).

Because there was a monetary incentive to participate in the surveys, and not all team members that completed the Tier 1 PBS training completed the surveys, the data may be skewed. The data would likely be more accurate if all team members, or at least all school districts participating in the PBS training, completed all surveys. Also, all the data are based on self-reports. The data would likely be more reliable if it was collected by an outside observer.

Results from this study indicated that between 2004 and 2007 Florida schools trained in Tier 1 PBS are implementing PBS with an increased level of commitment each year. From 2004 to 2005, 54% of PBS trained schools scored 70 or above on the Benchmark of Quality evaluation. The Benchmark scoring form was based on a 100 point scale. Schools considered high implementers with strong fidelity scored 70 or greater on the BoQ. Schools scoring below 70 were considered low implementers. In 2005-1006 the percentage of PBS trained schools that scored 70 or above on the BoQ increased to 63%, and by 2006-2007 65% of PBS trained schools in Florida had a BoQ score of at least 70 (Childs et al., 2010).

Results from this study also suggested that there is a difference in implementation fidelity in terms of school types. The highest level of implementation fidelity was displayed by
alternative/center schools with average BoQ scores of 69, 76, and 78 for the three school years between 2004 and 2007. With an average BoQ score of 71.3 over the three year span, elementary schools in Florida had the next highest level of fidelity. Middle schools followed with an average BoQ score of 67.3, and then high schools with the lowest average BoQ score of 66 (Childs et al., 2010).

Childs et al. (2010) noted that behavioral outcomes, implementation fidelity, and academic achievement data were not significant at the high school level in comparison to other school levels. Of all the schools that received PBS training in Florida, only 9% were high schools. As a result of PBS implementation not being effective at the high school level, Florida’s PBS Project started the following efforts for change:

- (a) implementing PBS Plus, a 1-year intensive planning process to build administrator and faculty buy in prior to initiating the Tier 1/Universal Level PBS training;
- (b) training one grade level at a time;
- (c) implementing continued and frequent social skills groups across all students, faculty, and staff;
- (d) utilizing both internal and external PBS coaches for each site;
- (e) extended training to accommodate larger school-based teams;
- (f) encouraging earlier student participation on the school-based teams; and
- (g) continuously advocating at the district level for administrator stability (Childs et al., 2010, p.208).

Childs et al. (2010) noted that additional research is necessary to determine if the methods listed above affected behavioral outcomes, implementation fidelity, and academic achievement.

The SWIF Survey results proposed that there was an overall opinion difference between BPS team members from higher implementing schools (BoQ of 70 or above) compared to this from lower implementing schools (BoQ below 70). Respondents from higher implementing
schools found more issues helpful, whereas respondents from lower implementing schools found more issues problematic. Respondents from both groups found a representative PBS team, administrator commitment, and having expectations and rules clearly defined as being helpful. Problematic issues differed for the two groups. Higher implementing respondents found adequate funding, staff stability, and student stability to be factors most problematic to PBS implementation. Lower implementing respondents found staff philosophy, staff beliefs about PBS effectiveness, and staff time for PBS to be the most problematic factors to PBS implementation (Childs et al., 2010).

The SWIF Survey suggested that team members’ perception of PBS was a factor that determined whether or not they highly implemented PBS in their schools. Team members from lower implementing schools did not have a strong belief about the positive impact PBS could have on their schools; therefore, they were unlikely to make the time to successfully implement PBS. However, team members from higher implementing schools likely valued PBS and made the changes and time necessary to successfully implement PBS.

Results from the Team Process Evaluation focusing on teamwork showed average scores of above 4 on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being strongly disagree and 5 being agree) for both higher and lower implementing schools. Higher implementing schools ($M = 89, SD = 13.2$) scored an average of 5 points higher than lower implementing schools ($M = 84, SD = 12.6$).

This study also suggests that PBS has a positive impact on student behavior in terms of reducing office discipline referrals (ODRs). After the first year of Tier 1 PBS implementation, Florida elementary, middle, and high schools found the average number of ODRs per 100 students decreased by 33%. This percentage reflected a sample size of 61 Florida schools. A paired $t$ test was conducted to determine whether the change in amount of office discipline
referrals, days of in school suspension (ISS), and days of out of school suspension (OSS) had statistical significance between the baseline and the first year of PBS implementation. Statistical significance was found between the baseline and the first year of PBS implementation for ODRs per 100 students. Results indicated a mean difference between ODRs in the baseline and the first year of 45.01 (SD = 101.3, p = .001) (Childs et al., 2010).

After the first year of implementing PBS in Florida elementary, middle, and high schools, there was also a change in the number of out of school suspensions and in school suspensions. In 50 Florida schools implementing PBS, the average number of ISS days was reduced by 16% per 100 students. After one year there was an increase of 2% in OSS days per 100 students across 60 schools implementing PBS. A t test with days of OSS and days of ISS did not show statistical significance over the first year (Childs et al., 2010).

Pre-K and alternative/center schools were not included in the descriptive analysis of the ODR, ISS, and OSS results. Pre-K schools often use discipline measures other than office referrals and suspensions because of the age and development level of the students. Alternative/centers schools generally have a small population with high turnover.

Data from these studies were also used to determine if there was a difference in outcomes across school types, comparing Florida’s elementary, middle, and high schools that implemented Tier 1 PBS. When looking at ODRs, middle schools and high schools reported similar decreases from the baseline year to the first year of PBS implementation. Fifteen middle schools averaged 34% fewer ODRs per 100 students, and nine high schools averaged 33% fewer referrals. The smallest decrease was in the 37 elementary schools with a 30% decrease in ODRs. Middle schools had the highest average number of ODRs with 285 per 100 students before PBS implementation (SD = 186.8), and 188 per 100 students after PBS implementation (SD = 132.5).
High schools had an average of 179 ODRs per 100 students before PBS implementation ($SD = 149.2$), and 121 per 100 students after PBS implementation ($SD = 106.0$). The lowest average number of ODRs was reported from elementary schools with 68 per 100 students before PBS implementation ($SD = 50.6$), and 47 after PBS implementation ($SD = 32.5$) (Childs et al., 2010).

The results of in school suspension in Florida’s elementary, middle, and high schools implementing PBS was also used for comparison across the grade level of the schools. All three levels, elementary, middle, and high school, showed less days of ISS during the first year PBS was implemented. Elementary schools, with a sample size of 27, had the greatest decrease of ISS during the first year of PBS implementation at 58% per 100 students ($SD = 40.83$). Middle schools, with a sample size of 20, had the second greatest decrease of ISS per 100 students at 8% ($SD = 44.51$). High schools, with a sample size of 3, had an average ISS decrease of 4% per 100 students ($SD = 40.85$) (Childs et al., 2010).

The number of out of school suspensions was also compared across school levels for schools implementing PBS. Florida elementary schools, with a sample size of 35, showed a decrease by 24% per 100 students in days of OSS during the initial year of PBS implementation ($SD = 17.37$). Results differed for the middle schools and high schools. The twenty middle schools reporting showed an average increase of 8% in days of OSS per 100 students ($SD = 59.55$). There was an average increase of 28% in days of OSS per 100 students across the five high schools recorded ($SD = 53.18$) (Childs et al., 2010).

There is likely an increase in the average percentage of OSS for middle schools and high schools, compared to a decrease in the average percentage of OSS for elementary schools, because OSS are for severe behavior problems. It is more likely for middle schools and high schools to have severe behavior problems that require OSS than elementary schools. Also, before
PBS was implemented in Florida schools, the average number of days of OSS was 20.2 for elementary schools, 89.4 days of OSS for middle schools, and 56.6 days of OSS for high schools. These data suggest middle schools and high schools had more days of OSS than elementary schools before PBS was implemented. After one year of PBS implementation, elementary schools had an average of 15.2 days of OSS, middle schools had 96.6 days of OSS, and high schools had 72.4 days of OSS (Childs et al., 2010). It was suggested through the data above that PBS implementation was likely successful with changing less severe behavior at the middle and high school levels (as shown through the ODR rates and ISS rates). PBS would likely be more effective with younger students at the elementary level in guiding behavior and preventing severe behavior problems, deserving of OSS, than at the middle or high school level. More research is necessary to determine how PBS can positively influence student behavior at the middle school and high school levels in terms of OSS rates.

Note that some of the sample sizes in the ODR, ISS, and OSS studies were small. One of the high school sample sizes included only three high schools. Further study should be done to more accurately determine the affect of PBS implementation in Florida schools.

Results from the Benchmarks of Quality survey indicated that schools implementing PBS with high fidelity (BoQ of 70 and above) were having a more successful outcome in terms of student behavior (based upon ODR rates, ISS rates, and OSS rates) than schools implementing PBS with low fidelity (BoQ rat below 70). Childs et al. (2010) found that high implementing schools had a lower average rate of ODRs per 100 students than low implementing schools during the three year study. The first year, the 17 high implementing schools showed 54.2% less ODRs per 100 students than the 17 low implementing schools. The second year the 21 high implementing schools reported 11.1% fewer ODRs per 100 students than the 13 low
implementing schools. The third year the 22 high implementing schools showed 38.3% less ODRs per 100 students than the 12 low implementing schools.

Throughout the three year study, the rate of in school suspensions was also compared between high implementing and low implementing schools. High implementing elementary, middle, and high schools had fewer days of ISS per 100 students than low implementing schools. Childs et al. (2010) reported that the first year the 37 high implementing schools showed 31.6% less days of ISS than the 30 low implementing schools. The second year the 73 high implementing schools showed 41.6% less days of ISS per 100 students than the 71 low implementing schools. The third year the 106 high implementing schools showed 26% less days of ISS per 100 students than the 72 low implementing schools.

The rate of out of school suspensions per 100 students was also less for high implementing schools when compared to low implementing schools. The same schools were examined for the ISS comparisons as those in the OSS. The first year of the study reported high implementing schools with 33.8% less days of OSS per 100 students when compared to low implementing schools. The second year showed high implementing schools with 21.1% fewer days of OSS per 100 students, and the third year showed 34.3% less days of OSS per 100 students when compared to low implementing schools.

Childs et al. (2010) indicated from the study that there is a relationship between Tier 1 PBS implementation fidelity and a reduction in the number of office discipline referrals per 100 students. Data also suggested that Tier 1 PBS had more impact on in school suspension numbers than out of school suspension numbers. Childs et al. (2010) suggested that Tier 1 PBS strategies are more applicable with less severe problem behaviors, and as a result PBS may help reduce ISS numbers. The study showed that behavior problems that are more severe were still occurring at a
similar rate. The more severe problem behaviors likely had OSS rather than ISS as a consequence. Further study of OSS and ISS rates is needed to conclude a relationship between OSS/ISS rates and PBS implementation.

A limitation of this study included the number of schools in Florida’s PBS database. Florida’s PBS database would be more accurate with the comparisons if it had more schools, and the database will likely continue to grow over the years. By including more schools and additional years in further studies, the relationship between PBS implementation and reduction the number of ODRs can be given with more confidence. The success of schools (in terms of ODRs, ISS, and OSS) with high PBS implementation fidelity compared to schools with low implementation fidelity can also be suggested with higher confidence.

**Barriers to School-Wide Change**

School-wide positive behavior support implementation is a beneficial addition to many school districts across the country (Childs et al., 2010; George et al., 2007; Horner et al., 2009). The question arises as to why SWPBS is not implemented in all schools if SWPBS is such an asset to schools that have already implemented it. Several barriers have been found to prevent schools from successfully implementing not only SWPBS, but school-wide initiatives in general.

One barrier to school-wide change is staff buy-in, or commitment, to the new practice. This barrier was demonstrated in the Florida study conducted by Childs et al. (2010). Not all teachers embraced the idea of SWPBS implementation in their schools, and therefore they did not implement SWPBS with a high level of fidelity. Staff members who did believe SWPBS was a positive asset to the school were more likely to implement SWPBS with higher fidelity. Results suggested that the more commitment staff had to implementing SWPBS, the more successful the program was in terms of students’ behavior (measured by ODR rates).
Kincaid, Childs, Blase, and Wallace (2007) also suggested staff buy-in to be a barrier to SWPBS. This study stemmed from two questions: “Why is SWPBS successfully implemented in one school but not in another?” and “What can we do to better promote successful implementation across a number of schools and districts?” (Kincaid et al., 2007, p. 174).

School teams that implemented SWPBS for a year or more were invited to the July 2004 Implementers’ Forum in Orlando, Florida. Participation was voluntary. Before the forum, all participating schools completed the Benchmarks of Quality (BoQ) to rate the schools as high or low implementers. For this study, scores of 70% or more on the BoQ were considered high implementing (HI) schools. Schools scoring below 70% were considered low implementing schools (LI).

Using BoQ scores, 70 participants from 26 schools in 18 districts were separated into a HI or LI category. The HI category consisted of 29 participants, and the LI category had 41 participants. Individuals were separated further into one of nine fairly equal groups (four HI and five LI groups). Individuals did not know how the groups were determined or whether they were in a HI or LI group (Kincaid et al., 2007).

Data were collected by a nominal group process in which participants were told not to talk to each other unless specifically asked to. Participants received two open-ended questions that included the following: “What have been the barriers to implementing school-wide positive behavior support in your school or district?” and “What has facilitated the implementation of school-wide positive behavior support at your school or in your district?” (Kincaid et al., 2007, p. 176).

After the questions were presented to each group, these seven steps were followed for each question: (a) without group discussion, participants wrote down their responses to the
question, (b) each group member shared an idea, and the idea was recorded on paper without discussion, (c) group discussion occurred for a limited amount of time to clarify ideas, (d) each group member ranked the top ten items and then computed the average rankings for each item, (e) groups discussed the rankings, (f) each group member re-ranked the top ten items, and (g) group members rated each idea on a seven-point scale. One scale was rated from 1 (not at all important) to 7 (very important) to answer the question of “How important is it to overcome this barrier in order to successfully implement PBS?” Another scale was rated from 1 (very unfeasible) to 7 (very feasible) to answer the question of “How feasible is it for the FLPBS project to impact this barrier?” (Kincaid et al., 2007).

In each question, statements were separated into HI and LI group responses. The purpose of the study was to determine the most important elements of SWPBS implementation. The eight groups totaled 173 responses to the question “What have been the barriers to implementing school-wide positive behavior support in your school or district?” and 144 responses to the question “What has facilitated the implementation of school-wide positive behavior support at your school or in your district?” (Kincaid et al., 2007). Staff buy-in issues were rated by both HI and LI groups as the most critical barrier to successful SWPBS implementation. With a total of 17, statements that referenced staff buy-in nearly doubled the amount of any other theme. Staff implementation, use of data, and reward systems each had nine statements, and time and implementation issues each had eight statements. District support was rated the highest facilitator with 14 statements, and FLPBS project support was next with 12 statements.

A second barrier to school-wide change is school staffs’ perception of the change initiative. Traditional beliefs and expectations form behavior patterns that oppose new ideas (Jerald, 2006). New approaches such as SWPBS can suggest ideas and practices that counter
deep-rooted views about how teachers instruct and schools are run. In the case of SWPBS implementation, the change is this: past practice has often shown disciplinary measures taken after problem behaviors occur, whereas SWPBS offers proactive, preventative approaches to misbehavior. School staff that is comfortable with past practices may be reluctant to try new practices such as SWPBS.

Insufficient district support can also be a barrier to school-wide change (George & Kincaid, 2008; Jerald, 2006; Kincaid et al., 2007). Managing programs and procedures is often the role districts play, rather than providing support directly to school improvement efforts. Support for school wide change from district administrators and school boards would likely benefit principals, teachers, and other staff members who try to balance change initiatives in addition to their daily responsibilities.

A fourth barrier to school-wide change is funding (George & Kincaid, 2008; Kincaid et al., 2007). Funding is needed for individual schools’ SWPBS activities, to pay district coordinators, for time spent in training and at team meetings, and for PBS implementers and trainers. George and Kincaid (2008) suggested providing schools with money to start school-wide activities. Some of these activities include paying for substitute teachers while team members attend trainings, creating a school store, buying school-wide incentives, and hiring someone to enter data. The FLPBS projected gave school districts up to $15,000 to help with their initial school-wide initiatives. However, one hesitation to the initial funding support was that schools may become dependent on the external money rather than trying to support their own SWPBS effort.
Chapter III: Results and Analysis Relative to Problem

Studies suggest that school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) is an effective measure to help reduce problem behavior of students and improve the overall climate of schools (Childs et al., 2010; George et al., 2007; Horner et al, 2009; Lassen et al., 2006). SWPBS uses educationally focused, proactive, preventative approaches to control problem behavior rather than reactive and punitive approaches (Ervin, Schaughency, Matthews, Goodman, & McGlinchey, 2007). Positive student-teacher social interactions build relationships and lessen students’ risk for problem behaviors and academic failure. Increasing positive student-teacher interactions through SWPBS is one method to improve behavioral and academic outcomes (McIntosh et al., 2010).

Several characteristics are important when implementing SWPBS. First, students need to know the school expectations and rules, and an efficient way to teach the expectations is by modeling appropriate behavior. Students also benefit from practicing the modeled behaviors. Another characteristic found to be important when implementing SWPBS is acknowledging students for positive behavior and following the rules, and having predetermined consequences given for misbehavior. Recording student behavior data and using it to make future decisions is also important to SWPBS implementation. Finally, SWPBS is most successful when schools have administrative support at the school and district levels (George et al., 2007; Horner et al., 2009; Lassen et al., 2006).

In addition to the above characteristics that are beneficial to successful SWPBS implementation, researchers found staff buy-in to be impactful (Childs et al., 2010; Kincaid et al., 2007). Faculty-wide commitment is a necessary component for successful SWPBS implementation because school staff is the heart of the effort. Researchers found that school staff
on PBS teams who implemented SWPBS with greater fidelity received more positive behavior results from students, measured by lower numbers office discipline referrals (Childs et al., 2010; George et al., 2007).

One way to engage staff in the SWPBS effort is to change their attitudes and beliefs (Childs et al., 2010; Kincaid et al., 2010). Teachers and other school staff members need to have a vision for the future and a sense of urgency in terms of the benefits SWPBS could have on their schools and in their districts (Jerald, 2006). If less time is spend disciplining students for misbehavior, more time can be devoted to furthering academics in the classroom (Lassen et al., 2006). By using research-based proactive, preventative methods of behavior support, teachers and school staff members can change the overall climate of their schools. Behavior monitoring is no longer reactive, but rather proactive.

Students’ engagement in the SWPBS effort is also necessary. As was mentioned in the above characteristics of successful SWPBS implementation, students need to be actively involved in the school-wide change. Researchers found it is beneficial for students to regularly review school and classroom expectations by teachers modeling them, and then students practice the expectations themselves. It is important for students to know that school expectations vary depending on the school environment. For example, cafeteria expectations are different from those in the library or classroom. When students know what is expected of them, they are more likely to respond in a positive manner (George et al., 2007; Lassen et al., 2006).

Across the studies, an incentive for student engagement included verbal acknowledgment of positive behaviors (Childs et al., 2010; George et al., 2007; Horner et al., 2009; Lassen et al., 2006). Researcher and theorist B. F. Skinner emphasized reinforcement processes that were shown to play a role in shaping behavior. Positive reinforcement strengthens behavior by
applying some event. Positive reinforcement can be carried over into schools by teachers giving praise after desired behaviors are performed by students. Skinner proposed reinforced behaviors (in this case positive behaviors) will be repeated (Boeree, 2006).

Another incentive for student engagement that was suggested by researchers in the studies was having a reward system (George et al., 2007; Lassen et al., 2006). A reward system offered students a tangible response to positive behavior. One example of a concrete reward was having students earn tokens for demonstrating positive behaviors in school. Students could use the tokens to purchase items they wanted from their school stores.
Chapter IV - Recommendations and Conclusion

Recommendation

With over 7,000 schools in the United States currently in various stages of adopting SWPBS (Horner et al., 2009), there is likely a reason these schools take on the challenge of SWPBS implementation. Time, effort, and commitment are necessary for successful SWPBS implementation, just as time, effort, and commitment are needed for other worthwhile school-wide change efforts. Implementing SWPBS comes at a cost, but the success may outweigh the price.

The opportunity to build a social culture in which students expect and support positive behavior from one another, and in which learning is maximized, is a worthy prospect. Students deserve to have a safe, predictable, positive school environment in which to learn. A good way to provide students with this desirable learning environment is by implementing SWPBS (Horner et al., 2009).

Successful SWPBS implementation begins with these seven features:

(a) school-wide expectations or rules for appropriate behavior; (b) direct, active teaching of the expectations and rules; (c) acknowledgment of students who obey the rules and otherwise engage in appropriate school conduct; (d) consequences for rule-violating behavior; (e) use of data to guide decision making; and (f) administrative support at the school and (g) district levels (George et al., 2007).

Once the above practices are in place, the SWPBS implementation process has begun. SWPBS requires a vision for the future. Staff buy-in and implementation fidelity are essential characteristics to SWPBS success. School staff members are the heart of the SWPBS implementation effort, and their level of dedication to the task will affect their schools’ success.
The amount of time, effort, and commitment do not stop once the SWPBS implementation effort has begun. Obstacles to implementing SWPBS can cause schools to revert back to past practices. Statisticians refer to this as “regression to the mean.” Obstacles schools face slowly cause them to focus on easier tasks, thus failing to accomplish the focus of their school improvement plans (Jerald, 2006). Keep focused on the goal ahead: to give students the best educational experience possible.

**Areas for Further Research**

Further research is necessary to determine the best practices for making the implementation of school-wide positive behavior support successful in elementary and middle schools. An ideal study would include a reasonable sample size of schools from a variety of states. Participants would include randomly selected administrators, teachers, school psychologists, and school support staff from each school. Staff members from each school would form school PBS teams. Teams would be trained in SWPBS implementation by specific instructors knowledgeable about SWPBS implementation.

Data would be collected over a three-year period through standardized and observational methods. Baseline data would be collected from each school, including basic demographics, number of office discipline referrals per year, number of in school suspensions per year, and number of out of school suspensions per year. An attitude and commitment survey toward SWPBS implementation would also be given to each participant through a Web survey at the beginning of each school year during the study, and then once more at the conclusion of the study timeframe. (A Web survey would be more economical and efficient for gathering information than paper and pencil format.) The survey would have a rating scales of 1 to 5 (1 being a poor attitude toward SWPBS/low level of commitment, and 5 being a positive attitude to
SWPBS/high level of commitment). The number of ODRs, ISS, and OSS per school would be collected each year too.

Observational data of student-staff interactions during class time and throughout various school settings would be included in the data three times per year. Initial school observations should show staff members modeling school expectations, and then further implementation and outcomes should be observed at the middle and end of each school year.

Individual school data results should be analyzed by individual PBS teams each year. Then correlations should be made between teams. Finally, overall correlations should be made between team members’ attitudes/commitment toward SWPBS and student behavioral outcomes in terms of ODR, ISS, and OSS rates.

**Summary and Conclusions**

To provide the best possible education, students need to be taught in an environment in which they feel safe, know what to expect, and are free from distractions. Schools need to reduce off-task behavior to utilize instructional time most effectively. Past practices of increasing the amount and intensity of punitive disciplinary procedures when schools address challenging behavior is not sufficient (Lassen et al., 2006). Studies show that responding to challenging student behavior is better met with proactive, preventative approaches. SWPBS is a research-supported method of proactive interventions for student misbehavior (Childs et al., 2010; George et al., 2007; Horner et al, 2009; Lassen et al., 2006).
References


