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Perceived Enablers and Barriers to the Implementation of PBIS in a Rural Elementary School

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by
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Approval Page

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Statement of Original Work

I declare the following:

I have read the Code of Student Conduct and Academic Responsibility, as described in the *Student Handbook* of Nova Southeastern University. This applied dissertation represents my original work, except where I have acknowledged the ideas, words, or material of other authors.

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Abstract

Perceived Enablers and Barriers to the Implementation of PBIS in a Rural Elementary School. Katherine Mechele Woodall, 2020: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and School of Criminal Justice. Keywords: teacher perceptions, PBIS implementation, PBIS sustainability, PBIS enablers, PBIS barriers, rural elementary schools

Embedded within the 1990 amendment of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was a mandate stipulating all school systems incorporate some form of PBIS. Elected officials thought it was necessary to implement positive behavior intervention and supports (PBIS) into school systems behavior plans due to the ever-increasing number of students with mild to severe behavioral issues. Behavior issues include truancy, verbal and physical abuse of teachers and peers, and depression, to name a few. These behavior issues negatively impact a student's ability to make satisfactory academic progress as well as negatively impacting the learning of their peers.

Yet, despite this mandate, many school systems either fail to incorporate PBIS into their behavior plan or are poorly implemented. Previous studies indicate a trend in teacher perception. These trends include lack of administration support, lack of thorough training, lack of understanding of the details in implementation, and teacher buy-in on PBIS effectiveness. Despite these trends in previous studies, none were conducted in a rural school system. All were conducted in large urban school systems.

The purpose of this qualitative case study is designed to explore teachers' perceptions of the implementation and sustainability of PBIS in the classroom and on a school-wide basis at a local rural elementary school. The rural classroom presents a unique dynamic in comparison to their urban and inner-city counterparts. The most significant difference is the behavior of students residing in poverty and the ailments associated with poverty. Rural school systems also do not have the luxury of funding often seen in urban and inner-city school systems. Lack of funding prohibits thorough professional development needed for mandated programs such as PBIS.

Teachers are the primary source of PBIS implementation. It is vital for teachers' express their opinions on the implementation and sustainability of PBIS. Allowing teachers to express their opinions provides a sense of ownership in the process. For PBIS to be effectively implemented in the classroom and throughout the school, teachers must feel they have a voice in PBIS execution and any changes made in the procedures of implementation.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

A new school year has embarked. Nationwide, teachers have endured the dreaded pre-school year professional development (PD) sessions. Now, the halls abound with the sound of the pitter-patter of young children scurrying to their classroom, all bursting with excitement and enthusiasm, keen to see their friends and open their brains to new knowledge. Teachers eagerly wait outside their classrooms, smiling and greeting their students with a warm and happy welcome. In due course, enthusiasm begins to wane as students become acclimated to their daily classroom routines. For some students, this acclimation results in behavior that is undesirable and disruptive to academic learning. This cyclic nature of student behavior has transpired since the dawn of formalized education (Phillips, 2019). Undesirable behavior is a wide-ranging arm, stretching from whispering to friends, failure to turn in homework, coming to class late, to more severe actions such as cursing the teacher, threatening the teacher or peers, actual violence towards the teacher, or peers, and weapons brought to school. For the less severe behaviors, teachers resort to tried and true teacher responses to of discipline of undesired behavior: ignoring the behavior, removing the student from the classroom, and assigning detention (Phillips, 2019). However, these methods are not sufficient for all students. It is at this point that the educational professionals, which comprise of teachers and administration, must begin extrapolating memories from PD in the manners to exchange the adverse behaviors with positive behaviors by use of Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS), all the while also managing the perceived enablers and barriers to the successful implementation of PBIS.

Phenomenon of Interest

PBIS seek to "prevent problems by defining and teaching consistent behavioral expectations across the school while also recognizing students for expected and appropriate behaviors" (Lohrmann, Forman, Martin, & Palmieri, 2008, p. 256). Nevertheless, despite PD training before the school year commences, many teachers are left perplexed to the PBIS terminology, the need for implementation, and the steps associated with the application of it (Bethune, 2017; Lohrmann et al., 2008; Pinkelman, McIntosh, Rasplica, Berg, & Strickland-Cohen, 2015). Many are left asking why students should be taught proper behavior in school, why can they not just expect good behavior, and stating students should already know what the appropriate expected behaviors (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, 2017b) as well as yearning for more training (Bethune, 2017; Lohrmann et al., 2008; Pinkelman et al., 2015). The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore teachers' perceived enablers and barriers in the implementation and sustainability of PBIS in a Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports

Background Justification

In 1975 Congress passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA), or PL94-142 (About IDEA, 2018). In 1997, Congress revised PL94-142 and changed the name to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Entrenched within IDEA are numerous edicts necessitating the creation of procedures to address undesirable behavior in students, and positive behavior supports to reinforce desirable behavior. It also stipulates the requirement of training teachers and administrators how to

implement said procedures (§1454 Use of funds, (a)(3)(B)(iii)(I), §1462 Personnel Development to improve services and results for children with disabilities, (a)(6)(D), §1462 Personnel Development to improve services and results for children with disabilities, (a)(7)(B), §1465 Interim alternative educational settings, behavioral supports, and systemic school interventions, (b)(1)(B, C). These edicts included training not only for special education teachers but also for general education teachers and all others who will interact with special needs students. Justification for comprehensive training for all who interact with special needs students, particularly general education teachers, was that all students be educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE), typically the general education classroom (§1454 Use of funds, (a)(3)(B)(iii)(I), §1462 Personnel Development to improve services and results for children with disabilities, (a)(6)(D), §1462 Personnel Development to improve services and results for children with disabilities, (a)(7)(B), §1465 Interim alternative educational settings, behavioral supports, and systemic school interventions, (b)(1)(B, C). Thus far, these directives fail to detail the particulars of what will be taught in the professional development sessions or the rate of recurrence of training, allowing each system to determine frequencies of training. Nevertheless, despite federal funding for training and implementation, school systems often fail to review studies that "… indicated a functional relationship between the coaching and an increase in the teachers' accuracy of implementation of the SWPBIS procedures" (Bethune, 2017, p. 136) when training is provided consciously throughout the school year.

Nationally, to meet these directives in IDEA, roughly three to four days preceding the commencement of the school year, administrators and teachers engage in required

preservice professional development, each session lasting approximately four hours. Within the past several years, school-wide positive behavior intervention and supports (SWBIS/PBIS) training has been incorporated into PD sessions. PBIS PD explicitly delineates the system's measures in addressing undesirable behavior in students as well as which supports will be implemented to reinforce positive behavior and reduce negative behavior (Bethune, 2017; Lohrmann et al., 2008; Pinkelman et al., 2015). Teachers begrudgingly go to the PD sessions, grousing to peers as to why PBIS is needed and how the training is a waste of time (PBIS.org, 2018), all the while unaware of the federal decrees requiring PBIS application in schools and the continuous professional development on the implementation of all staff. While teachers only receive a cursory training in PBIS, administrators receive continuous, monthly meetings, and training (Huntsville City Schools, 2016). According to research and teachers (Bethune, 2017; Lohrmann et al., 2008; Pinkelman et al., 2015; personal conversations with coworkers), a need is present for prolonged training with teachers in the implementation of PBIS in a local school district within Grades K-5.

Deficiencies in the Evidence

Despite federal edicts requiring PBIS training for all, studies indicate conducting PD only at the beginning of the school year will not facilitate in improving behavior or increasing students' skills in self-regulation (Bethune, 2017; Lohrmann et al., 2008; Pinkelman et al., 2015). Despite the plethora of studies proving the efficacy of PBIS, there has been a limited number of studies on teacher perception of the trainings for PBIS implementation (Bethune, 2017; Lohrmann et al., 2008; Pinkelman et al., 2015). Teachers are the proverbial first line of defense regarding the modification of undesired

student behavior. If teachers do not understand reasons to implement PBIS or resist the implementation, then PBIS will either not be implemented correctly or not at all (Bethune, 2017; Lohrmann et al., 2008; Pinkelman et al., 2015). For implementation to be successful and sustained, then what teachers perceive as the enablers and barriers must be known and incorporated into their professional development (Bethune, 2017; Lohrmann et al., 2008; Pinkelman et al., 2015).

Audience

The target audience is school personnel, including school board members, central office administrators, school administrators, all teachers, and support staff, which comprise of teacher aides, School Resource Officers, as well as anyone else who will interact with students. Professional development seminars will vary according to the amount of direct contact the position has with students.

Setting of the Study

This study was conducted in local rural elementary school, with a concentration on kindergarten through fifth-grade teachers.

Researcher's Role

The researcher is a certified special education teacher who is currently a teacher with the school system.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore teachers' perceived enablers and barriers in the implementation and sustainability of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in a rural elementary school, Grades K-5.

Disruptive behaviors in the classroom are increasing at an exponential rate (Burke, Oats, Ringle, Fichtner, & DelGaudio, 2011; Dalgiç & Bayhan, 2014; Shun & Shek, 2012). These disruptive behaviors range from minor infractions such as talking in class and tardiness to more serious infractions such as violence against another student or teacher and vandalism (Shun & Shek, 2012). To help combat these behaviors, the federal government embedded regulations for school systems to follow, by utilizing PBIS (About IDEA, 2018). Included in this is teacher training for application (§1454 Use of funds, (a)(3)(B)(iii)(I), §1462 Personnel Development to improve services and results for children with disabilities, (a)(6)(D), §1462 Personnel Development to improve services and results for children with disabilities, (a)(7)(B), §1465 Interim alternative educational settings, behavioral supports, and systemic school interventions, (b)(1)(B, C). Research has demonstrated distinctly perceived enablers and barriers to the implementation and sustaining of PBIS (Bethune, 2017; Lohrmann et al., 2008; Pinkelman et al., 2015).

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore teachers' perceived enablers and barriers in the implementation and sustainability of PBIS in a rural elementary school, Grades K-5.

Theoretical Framework

This study employed multiple theoretical frameworks, such as Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory, B. F. Skinner's reinforcement theory, and Perceptual control theory. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory believed that events that transpire in society shape an individual's behavior. The researcher employed bioecological theory because it displays that outside events influence an individual's behavior and that an individual's behavior influences his environment. Translated, this exemplifies that a

teacher's behavior/reaction towards student behavior is cyclic, meaning the behavior of each feeds off of the other.

Bronfenbrenner's biological theory contains four developmental stages. These stages consist of, (a) microsystem, (b) mesosystem, (c) exosystem, and (d) macrosystem (Oswalt, 2016). These developmental stages equate to ringlets seen in the water when it is disturbed from a thrown rock. The ringlets expand as the child ages and grows. The microsystem, the central most ring, involves relationships that are most central to a child. Examples include school and home (Helle-Valle, Binder, & Stige, 2015). Mesosystem follows the microsystem, referenced as the reactionary phase or stage. Environmental occurrences from the microsystem see a reaction from individuals in the mesosystem. Examples include interactions between parents or siblings, between parents and teachers, or interactions between neighbors and the family unit (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). The third ringlet is exosystem. Again, this stage does not always have the child engaging directly with events in the environment. Still, the occurrences directly correlate to the behavior of the child. These occurrences include parental work issues (change in work schedule, reprimands from a boss), interactions between extended family members, and neighborhood violence (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). The macrosystem is the outermost ringlet. This ringlet can be the most impactful with a lasting duration, despite being the furthest away from the central ringlet to the child. These comprise of federal, state, laws, economic influences, cultural values, and wars (Oswalt, 2016).

Operant conditioning theory, developed by B. F. Skinner, is also known as reinforcement theory. Depending on the field of research, the terms are interchangeable. This study will use the term reinforcement theory. The principle belief in reinforcement

theory is that for every action, there are consequences, whether they are positive or negative, and a reinforcement of the action derived from the consequences (Berns, 2013; Driscoll & Nagel, 2008). Actions or events precede behavioral consequences and act as a stimulus or antecedent that instigates the behavior (Pratt & Dubie, 2018). Positive behavior intervention and supports are an example of Reinforcement theory, utilizing reinforcements for actions, both for student and teacher. When a teacher reacts negatively or doles out what the student deems punitive punishment, then the punishment would reinforce the undesired student behavior. However, positive consequences for appropriate behavior reinforces the appropriate behavior. The reinforcement theory targets the giving of rewards as a stimulus for desired behaviors. The reward reinforces desired behavior resulting in a conditioned response of the child. Reinforcers are items that encourage and support desired responses, either positively or negatively (Culatta, 2013).

Finally, perceptual control theory is also applied. In 1960, William Powers, Robert K. Clark, and Robert MacFarland first published *A general feedback theory of human behavior. Part I*, laying the foundation for what would become known as Perceptual control theory (Bill Powers: The developer of PCT, 2019). Perceptual control theory "explains the observation that living things control perceptual variables that are important to them, and that their behavior resists environmental disturbances influencing those variables" (IAPCT: International Association for Perceptual Control Theory, 2013, p. 2). In simple terms, this translates into a person's perception of an event that influences his behavior and environment. According to Zhao and Cziko (2001), individuals attempt to align their perceptions and environmental conditions. Ergo, if teachers' perception of a behavior policy is trivial or cumbersome, then they will either not implement it or will

contest its utilization (Scott, 2018). However, the opposite is also true. If the perception of a behavior policy or any other school system policy is positive and useful, then the teacher is more inclined to implement it with fidelity.

Acronyms

ASD. Autism Spectrum Disorder

BCBA. Board Certified Behavioral Analyst

BIP. Behavior Intervention Plan

DD. Developmental delay

DOE. Department of Education

EAHCA. Education for All Handicapped Children Act

EBD. Emotional behavioral disabled

FAPE. Free and public education

FBA. Functional Behavior Assessment

ID. Intellectual disabled

IDEA. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

IEP. Individual education plan

LRE. Least restrictive environment

NCLB. No Child Left Behind

OHI. Other health impaired

PBIS. Positive behavior interventions and supports

PD. Professional development

PL. Public law

PST. Problem-solving team

PTSD. Post-traumatic stress disorder

SLD. Specific learning disability

SWPBIS. School-wide positive behavior interventions and supports

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Student Demographics

American public schools, in the 2015/2016 school year, had a total enrollment of 132,853 (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019a). Elementary schools had an enrollment of 88,665 students. Whereas secondary schools had an enrollment of 26,986 students. Combined grades included 16,511 students, and 691 were alternative behavioral schools (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019a; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2018b). Head start and pre-kindergarten through fifth grades are housed within the walls of elementary schools, equating to approximately 35.5 million children. Grades six through twelfth are in secondary public schools, nearly 15.1 million children (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019a; National Center for Education Statistics, 2019b). These figures can be further separated according to special needs, socio-economic status, ethnicity, and violence.

Public school enrollment delineates student enrollment according to ethnicity and race (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019b). Caucasians made up the main student population, with 49.3%. Hispanic students followed by 25.9% Caucasians. African American students are listed as the third-largest population, with 15.6%, and 2.9% identifying as multiracial. Lastly, 1% of students identify as American Indian/Inuit (KidsData, 2018). The poverty rate, according to the U.S. Census, for students in America is 12.3% (U.S. Census, 2017). In 2014, an astonishing 24% of children bore witness to violent behaviors, such as in the home, neighborhood, or school (Children's exposure to violence, 2016). It is a grim thought knowing this many students see and feel violence daily. In 2014, nearly 1/3 reported being physically assaulted, 15% indicated

suffering from neglect, and 5% conveyed being the victim of sexual abuse (Children's exposure to violence, 2016).

Lastly, the 2015/2016 school year saw roughly 13%, or 6.7 million of students with an IEP or 504 Plan. IEPs and 504 Plans employ special education services for academically struggling students or students with severe health issues (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2018a). Specific learning disabled (SLD) comprises 34% of the students with an IEP. Speech or language impairments comprise 20% of students with an IEP, which is often seen as a concurrent disability. Next is another health impairment (OHI), 14%, and includes students thought to have oppositional defiance disorder (ODD). Students on the Autistic spectrum (ASD) consist of 9% of the population. Some students, 6%, are classified as Developmental delayed (DD); who are usually students in Grades K-3. Intellectual disability (ID) makes up 6% of the school population. Emotionally disturbed (ED) consists of 5% of students and is shared with students classified as OHI and ODD students. As previously stated, some students have concurrent diagnoses; these students make up approximately 2% of students with an IEP. Lastly, 1% of students with an IEP will have a hearing impaired and or orthopedic impairment (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019).

Behavior Demographics

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2019b), there were approximately 50.6 million students enrolled in public schools in 2016 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019e). Approximately 14% of these students in the 2017/2018 school year, received special education services. Emotional and or behavior disturbed (EBD) students make up approximately 5% of students with an IEP (National Center for

Educational Statistics, 2019). Of this total population, 3.5 million received in-school suspensions, 3.4 million received out-of-school suspension, resulting in lost academic time; and 130,000 were expelled from school, which also resulted in lost academic time (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Why is it important to know this information? It is important because these students are in the general education classroom and display varying levels of classroom disruptions, preventing academic learning for themselves and their peers.

Rural Communities

The U.S. Census has three categories referenced as rural, and those are fringe, distant, and remote, of which each has a distinct definition. Fringe is "less than or equal to 5 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an urban cluster" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019c, p. 6). Distant is "more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is more than 2.5 miles but less than or equal to 10 miles from an urban cluster" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019c, p. 6). Finally, the rural remote is "more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and is also more than 10 miles from an urban cluster" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019c, p. 6).

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), estimated that one-fourth of the students in this southern state lives in poverty (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019c). NCES noted that of all three types of rural education, at least 13.9% of rural schools have a disproportionate number of students receive reduced or free meals, a staggering 75% of the total student population. Whereas, 34.4% of rural schools reported that between 50%-75% of their students received free or reduced meals" (National Center

for Education Statistics, 2019c, p. 4). Finally, 35.4% of rural schools report that 35.5% of their total student population receives free or reduced meals" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019c, p. 4). According to NCES, 22.3% of rural schools lack parental involvement, 28.4% live in poverty, 26% of attend class unprepared, 18.9% of rural students express apathy towards education, and 8.4% of rural schools report high levels of student tardiness (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019d).

Rural communities face more significant challenges than their urban counterparts. They have a higher rate of poverty in comparison to urban communities, 16.7% compared to 13%, respectively (Thiede, Greiman, Weiler, Beda, & Conroy, 2017). Rural communities also have a higher rate of disabilities than those in urban areas (Thiede et al., 2017). In addition to high poverty rates, rural communities see high rates of homelessness and substance abuse. All of these are intermingled, perpetuating the severity of the other, poverty, homelessness, and substance abuse. Rural communities have not seen recovery from the 2008 recession as urban centers have. This lack of recovery is due to a lack of industry returning to rural locals, which has thereby increased poverty in these areas (Nager, 2007; Thiede et al., 2017). Homelessness in rural communities is not the often-envisioned person living on the street. Rural homelessness consists of a family, which are two-parent or single-parent with multiple children, residing with a friend or relative. It is the fastest-growing subgroup of homelessness in the nation (Yousey & Samuda, 2018). Characteristics of homeless families include health issues, which are due to a lack of funds to see a physician, emotional issues, which includes depression seen in both the parent(s) and child(ren), lack of adequate nutrition, and educational difficulties with the children (Yousey & Samuda, 2018). Students living

in rural communities come to school dealing with these adult issues, resulting in poor concentration skills, poor socialization skills, and behavioral issues.

Issues in rural education. In conjunction with dealing with the above-mentioned familial issues, school systems located in rural America face the daunting challenge of implementing federal mandates. The challenges for implementing federal mandates consist of inadequate tax base for crucial revenues, a need to provide services over an extensive geographic area, inadequate facilities, scarce related service providers, such as physical therapist, speech/language pathologist, and occupational therapist, high transportation costs, and a lack of access to adequate professional development (Mitchem & Richard, 2003; Showalter, Klein, Johnson, & Hartman, 2017).

In many instances, rural communities rely on the school for resources that reach far beyond the education of the children. Schools in rural communities are usually the largest employer in the area. Rural schools educate over 40% of the nation's students yet obtain only 22% of federal education funding (National Education Association, 2019). Rural schools also function as the social hub of the community, all the while being underfunded (National Education Association, 2019). Underfunding of rural schools not only stems from little funding from the federal government but also little revenue provided from community taxes.

Additionally, rural schools have the disadvantage of small population size in comparison to their urban counterparts.

For example, when rural districts apply for grants, the resulting funds based on the number of students are often too small to accomplish the purpose of the

> award. One rural district received a technology grant of $800—scarcely enough to buy a single computer. (National Education Association, 2019, p. 2)

Behavioral consequences of demographics. The United Stated has an abundance of varying people and cultures. The complexities of socialization skills begin almost immediately once a person is born. Socialization skills are taught to young children by family members and others within their immediate circle, such as extended family, church, and neighbors (Berk, 2013). Nevertheless, various segments in communities struggle to comprehend the appropriateness or inappropriateness socialization, incapable of adapting to societal expectations. Children stricken with poverty and violence are a subcategory that is expressly at a disadvantage when learning social skills that are deemed appropriate.

Absolute and relative poverty are listed by World Poverty (2018) as two types of poverty. Citizens of developing countries such as Africa, Asia, and South America, which exhibit dire financial states, are considered to be living in absolute poverty. “Such poverty at its worst can involve hunger amounting to starvation, often combined with inadequate shelter or housing and clothing” (World poverty: A look at causes and solutions, 2018, p. 6). Relative poverty is seen in countries classified as developed, such as the United States and Great Britain. Relative poverty,

> involves the inability to obtain social necessities available to the majority and is often intensified by social exclusion. In a society where 90% rely on their computer and car, then those who cannot afford these things may malfunction and are poor and may well be ostracized or socially excluded. (World poverty: A look at causes and solutions, 2018, p. 7)

A UNICEF study discovered an alarming increase of up to 30% in the drop-out rate among malnourished students (Mwambene, Muula, & Leo, 2013). The study also indicated that malnourished students had an increase in bullying others, being bullied, or exhibiting aggression towards peers (Mwambene et al., 2013).

Violence in the home and or neighborhood is a detrimental characteristic of poverty. Financial stress is a significant contributor to violence in the home and neighborhoods (Burk & Deustch, 2014). Home and neighborhood violence include physical and emotional (Burk & Deustch, 2014). Inner-city students bore witness to copious amounts of violence, not only potential parental but also gang-related, frequently resulting in death. For these students, this way of life develops into a cyclical nature, always fighting for survival, all the while inept at learning appropriate socialization skills (Burk & Deustch, 2014; Woodall, 2017).

Adaptation to societal norms is a must for every person if he or she wishes to function. Social norms are "the customary rules that govern behavior in groups and societies" (Bicchieri & Muldoon, 2014, p. 1). Bestowing societal norms upon children is conducted via a plethora of resources: videos, television, interactions with peers, social media, family, neighborhoods, and religious affiliations (Nurco & Lemer, 1999). "Norms influence behavior because, through a process of socialization that starts in infancy, they become part of one's motives for action: conformity to standing norms is a stable acquired disposition that is independent of the consequences of conforming" (Bicchieri & Muldoon, 2014, p. 21). When a child experiences these different norms regularly, the norms become embedded within the child's psyche and thereby become his norm of reference (Burk & Deustch, 2014). As these adverse norms become embedded within the

child, symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) will begin to be exhibited. "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is an anxiety disorder that may develop after exposure to a terrifying event or ordeal in which severe physical harm occurred or was threatened" (National Institute of Mental Health, 2016, p. 1). Symptoms children display when experiencing PTSD include trouble sleeping, depression, feelings of edginess, startled easily, aggressive outbursts, and potential substance abuse (National Institute of Mental Health, 2016; Post-traumatic stress disorder in children, 2018).

Behaviors in the classroom. Students present atypical behaviors in classrooms when they live in poverty and or suffer from violence. Children from generational poverty households, poverty that circles family's generation after generation, have shown lower cognition abilities, a reduction in academic performance, higher truancy rates, and rates of behavior issues (Burk & Deustch, 2014; Engle & Black, 2014). "The consequences of early school failure are increased likelihood of truancy, drop out and unhealthy or delinquent behaviors" (Engle & Black, 2014, p. 2). Students exhibit a plethora of symptoms from undergoing traumatic events. Symptoms comprise inability in concentration skills for tasks, forgetfulness, disconnection from peers and the learning environment, an incapability to process new information, and a lack of understanding in the ability to objectively explore data (Gunn, 2018). The perception of urgency and insecurity is created by living in poverty and lingering PTSD symptoms from continuous traumatic events that are associated with living in poverty. These students may exhibit signs of attention-deficit/hyperactive disorder (ADHD), have mood swings, be a victim of bullying or bullying peers, and distrust others, primarily people viewed as authority figures such as teacher or other school personnel (Gunn, 2018).

Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Nearly 50.6 million children are enrolled in public schools in America (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2018b). A large number of enrolled students equates to a large percentage, of which 13% of students are serviced with an IEP. These students receive academic services in the self-contained classroom or the general education classroom, depending on the severity of the student's disability. Disabilities range from a learning disability (LD), physical disability, or emotional/behavioral disability (EBD) (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019). The federal government mandated that anyone who works with children in a school setting must receive specialized training in PBIS. This mandate is due to the magnitude of students with an IEP or 504 plan in the general education classroom (§1454 Use of funds, (a)(3)(B)(iii)(I); §1462 Personnel Development to improve services and results for children with disabilities, (a)(6)(D); §1462 Personnel Development to improve services and results for children with disabilities, (a)(7)(B); §1465 Interim alternative educational settings, behavioral supports, and systemic school interventions, (b)(1)(B, C) (Swenson & Ryder, 2016).

Many people associate disabilities with mental or physical issues. However, disabilities can also be behavioral. Behavioral issues transform into academic disturbances that deter learning and behavioral distractions affect the entire class. Behavioral distractions interfere with academics by directing teacher attention toward the problem behavior rather than remaining on academic instruction or having the teacher emphasizing the removal of the disruptive student from the classroom, many times resulting in in-school suspension (ISS) or suspension from school (Burk & Deustch, 2014; Swenson & Ryder, 2016). Rather then systems displaying reactiveness towards

problem behaviors, the goal of the federal mandate is proactive interactions between school officials and student behaviors. PBIS delivers a structure for proactiveness in school systems (Burk & Deustch, 2014; Woodall, 2017).

Free and public education (FAPE). Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (1973) allows for all students to receive a free and public education (FAPE) (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The Department of Education (DOE) (U.S. Department of Education, 2010) states FAPE consists of students being allowed access to academics in regular classes alongside their peers, education with appropriate services and aids if needed, or academics and other needed services in a separate classroom. The curriculum may consist of instruction that is specially designed (i.e., including behavior education skills). When a school fails to implement required procedures or to provide behavioral supports, then the system is failing to provide beneficial and meaningful education. A lack of behavioral supports will create a situation of a failure to provide FAPE, a denial of FAPE (Swenson & Ryder, 2016).

A factor considered when a school system or legal official is determining if a denial of FAPE has occurred determining if the necessary behavioral supports were provided to the student. That it, does behavior impede the student's ability to learn or the learning of his peers? If a denial of FAPE occurred then officials determine what behavioral supports were implemented, the frequency of the supports, the duration of the supports, did these supports need to be adjusted, were the supports adjusted and what the results of the adjustment, and what were the antecedents to said behavior (Swenson & Ryder, 2016). These behavior supports would fall under the auspice of PBIS (Swenson & Ryder, 2016).

Indicators of a student not receiving FAPE include behaviors, which impede his or his peers' ability to learn, a student not receiving necessary behavioral supports as required by federal mandates in IDEA, NCLB, and ESSA, and disciplinary action removing the student from the learning environment for up to ten consecutive days (Swenson & Ryder, 2016). According to 34 CFR §300.536 (2010), when a student receives disciplinary removal for behavioral issues from the academic setting for more than ten days within the academic year, has been subject to a developing pattern of a series of removals from the academic setting within the school year, or for behavioral related issues, the school must perform a change in placement, thereby allowing learning to continue (20 U.S.C. § 1415 Procedural Safeguards, 34 CFR § 300.536 Change of placement because of disciplinary removals).

One requirement of states and LEAs mandated by IDEA is that all school personnel must be adequately and appropriately trained in behavioral support systems (34 CFR §300.156 and 300.207). Because a student's behavior can impede his and or his peers' learning, teachers and other school staff must be appropriately trained and provided behavioral supports. Lack of said training can result in deficient behavior supports offered by teachers and other staff to those students needing behavioral interventions and supports. Inefficient behavioral supports training can result in the school being in jeopardy of failing to provide and deny FAPE (Swenson & Ryder, 2016).

Disciplinary actions failing to provide FAPE or denial of FAPE include but are not limited to office referrals that begin to create behavioral patterns, ISS resulting in prolonged time away from instructional time, students repeatedly placed on administrative leave/a day off (an unofficial form of sending a student home for

behavioral issues without the formal procedure of paperwork associated with suspension), continued use of the terms of risk assessment or psychological evaluation as a reason for not allowing a student to return to school, and altering a student's dismissal time with no formal written notice of a change in dismissal from instructional time (Swenson & Ryder, 2016).

Many students today have some form of disability. Sadly, many also have a concurrent diagnosis, including behavioral issues. The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) has made the commitment to the protection of all students, particularly students with special needs, ensuring access to learning with their abled peers in environments that are safe as well as supportive **(**Swenson & Ryder, 2016). OSERS also committed itself to ensure teachers and staff have the tools to assist with behavioral issues and are appropriately trained in skills to assist in helping alleviate disciplinary incidents before occurrence (Swenson & Ryder, 2016). Tools at teachers' disposal include behavioral supports from the administration, written behavioral expectation guidelines set by the school system, Board of Education and or superintendent, and techniques utilized in PBIS (Swenson & Ryder, 2016). Behavioral supports are executed on a multi-tiered behavioral framework in many school systems (Swenson & Ryder, 2016). This multi-tiered delivery allows schools an opportunity to enable the establishment and delivery of FAPE by providing children, teachers, and staff with the behavioral supports needed to thwart undesired behavior and alternative disciplinary tactics that may inhibit learning (Swenson & Ryder, 2016).

PBIS Framework

In schools across the country, echoing throughout the halls of schools, growing behavioral challenges are seen and heard. These behavioral challenges include student fights, ever-increasing truancy, and verbal and physical abuse of teachers. In order to help assuage and decrease the behavioral challenges, federal regulations require schools to integrate PBIS practices in their classroom and school behavioral guidelines (George, 2018; Ögülmüs & Vuran, 2016; Swenson & Ryder, 2016; §1454 Use of funds, (a)(3)(B)(iii)(I); §1462 Personnel Development to improve services and results for children with disabilities, (a)(6)(D); §1462 Personnel Development to improve services and results for children with disabilities, (a)(7)(B); §1465 Interim alternative educational settings, behavioral supports, and systemic school interventions, (b)(1)(B, C). PBIS procedures aim to discern the primary source or trigger of adverse behaviors. Once the source of the adverse behavior is determined, then coping skills can be taught, thereby exchanging the adverse behavior with preferred behavior. One method of this exchange is to continuously reinforce the desired behavior until it becomes automatic, with a gradual decrease of reinforcement (Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, 2017a; Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, 2018).

The nexus of PBIS is dependent on seven axioms:

1. All students can learn apropos behavior - PBIS established concordats on the canon that all children are adroit in espousing in socially acceptable behavior. As such, the onus is on the adult/teacher to identify the antecedents within the environment, which promotes opposite behavior or antecedents which deconstruct apposite behavior, thereby adjusting the environment or resources to enable the facilitation of appropriate behavior.

2. As soon as negative behavior is noted, early intervention for negative behavior should commence - The preference is for intervention to occur before the occurrence of targeted negative behaviors. Problem behaviors become manageable if intervention transpires prior to the escalation of the event.

3. Behavior service models should be multi-tiered - conveyance of PBIS services are derivatives of the individual needs of each student and the micro-society of the school system. In order to accomplish student behavior modification successes at an elevated level, differentiation in instructional pedagogy should vary in both intensity and the environment.

4. Research-based behavior models will be utilized - IDEA and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) both mandate the use of scientifically reliable behavioral interventions and supports. Using interventions and supports that are research-based and valid affords the most significant prospect for applying strategies to the largest student population that will be effective.

5. Interventions will be scientifically validated before implementation - Monitoring students' interventions via data is the only method to adjudicate whether interventions are successful or need to be readdressed and modified. Frequently conducting assessments allows for monitoring of small, subtle changes in student behavior. Frequent monitoring/assessments will also maximize the effect of the intervention.

6. Progress monitoring will be on a cyclical basis to display adequate progress and to determine if any modifications need to should be to behavior plans**.** The central tenant on the reliability and validity in the fidelity of PBIS interventions is driven by data-based

conclusions constructed on the foundations of students' responses to said interventions. Professional judgments, gathered from performance and discipline referral data, are the driving factors in determining decisions in practicing PBIS. A system of cyclical data collections must be in place and utilized at regular intervals for informed decisions regarding behavioral interventions.

7. Three types of assessments of behavior plans – (a) initial screening for data comparison; analytical data broken down into the time of day the behavior occurred, (b) the problem behavior and the location of the behavior; and (c) finally progress monitoring of intervention methods (Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, 2019b).

There are three levels of PBIS, which schools utilize, called tiers (see Figure 1). Tier 1, which is prevention and used school-wide, Tier 2, which is multi-tiered support for students needing more concentrated support, and Tier 3, which is founded on data-based decision making for specialized support systems for students needing intensive support (Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, 2017a; Ögülmüs & Vuran, 2016; Tyre & Feuerborn, 2017). The premise of Tier 1 has the teacher demonstrating the desired behavior through teacher-student interaction and problem-solving sessions (Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, 2017a; Woodall, 2016). Tier 2 supports initializes supports and interventions that are specialized for smaller groups of students. These students have demonstrated risks of an acceleration detrimental social-emotional development and are not responding to traditional discipline. Included in Tier 2 supports are students residing in poverty that have been the victim of violent abuse or neglect, and students that present learning or communication delays (Positive Behavioral

Interventions & Supports, 2017a; Tyre, & Feuerborn, 2017). While Tier 3 contains the least number of students, approximately 5% of the student population, they are the students with the greatest need for interventions and supports (Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, 2017a). The core of PBIS is to uncover the *why* of a student's adverse behavior. When the *why* has been learned, then an action plan with supports to exchange the adverse behavior with desired behavior is created and implemented. It is essential that the primary person executing the action plan remain attentive in fulfilling rewards for positive/desirable behaviors, all the while gradually phasing rewards out as the new desired behaviors become habitual (Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, 2017a; Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, 2018).

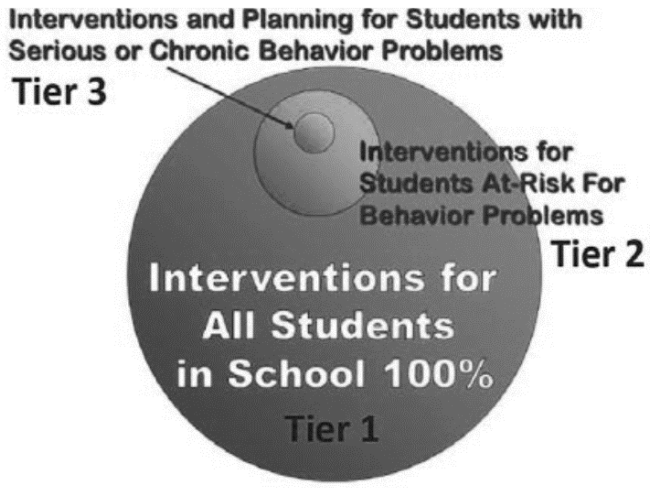

Figure 1. Tiers of Intervention in the Safe and Responsive Schools Framework.

Tier 1. The lowest level of behavioral supports within PBIS is Tier 1 (Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, 2019b). In many schools, teachers and administrations have reactive protocols toward student behavior rather than proactive conventions, which would deter unwanted, negative behaviors. Tier 1 sees a reversal of this method, proactive conventions rather than reactive protocols. The supposition is that

proactive conventions to student behaviors are a deterrent to unwanted, negative behavior and promote acceptable behavior, behavior which promotes healthy, positive socialization as well as environments conducive to learning. The supports of Tier 1 incorporate rules for the entire school in addition to individual teacher classrooms, customs of the entire school and individual classrooms, customs that are taught and established by PBIS professionals (including many school staff trained explicitly in PBIS means and measures) (Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, 2019b). These customs include techniques to recognize and avert the manifestations of behaviors that are undesirable.

Tier 2. Tier 2 intervention services are presented to students who have behavioral issues requiring visits to administration, such as principal or vice-principal, between two and five times in a school year. Checking into the administrative office once or twice during the day can be enough of an intervention to be successful for many of these students (Richardson, Lewis, Butler, & DeJarnett, 2018). The strategy behind Tier 2 intervention services is to deliver interventions that target individual students who are failing to respond to Tier 1 interventions (Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, 2019f; Richardson et al., 2018). These students engage in more prolonged and severe problem behaviors that require more intensive supports and the need for smaller group interventions. Tier 2 support is focused on providing interventions in small groups of roughly ten students or fewer (Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, 2019f; Richardson et al., 2018). Almost 70% of referred students see success in the Tier 2 intervention supports. Three standard Tier 2 supports include Behavior Education Plan (BEP), check-in/check-out with the administration or selected teacher, and social skills

club (Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, 2019f; Richardson et al., 2018). Nevertheless, there are still those who do not respond to Tier 2 intervention supports and require the more intensive services provided in Tier 3.

Tier 3. One to five percent of the total student population requires Tier 3 supports. These are the students with specific medical disabilities or those displaying chronic behavioral problems that do not respond to Tier 2 support services (Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, 2019d; Richardson et al., 2018). Behavior problems can include students identified with Autism, developmental disabilities, emotional disabilities, and or those who display physical aggression towards an authority figure, such as administration, teachers, school resource officers, and other staff or another student, possession of a prohibited weapon, possession of illegal substances such as drugs or alcohol, and improper use of technological equipment, such as downloading pornographic material for example, behaviors that can be harmful to self and or others, and impedes the learning of self and or others (Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, 2019d; Richardson et al., 2018). “The goal of tertiary prevention is to diminish the frequency and intensity of problem behavior and, also, to increase the student's adaptive skills and opportunities for an enhanced quality of life” (Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports 2019e, p. 11) and supports are systematically designed to decrease or diminish the intervals and intensity of the problem behaviors (Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, 2019d).

Tier 3 consists of a Problem-Solving Team (PST). This team contains various people within the school organization and specializations. The size of the PST will vary according to the size of the school. For larger schools, the PST will consist of a member

of administration, such as principal or assistant principal, a general education teacher, a special education teacher, school counselor, school psychologist, school social worker, and a BCBA. Some larger schools could include Autism Specialists as well. However, smaller schools often lack the financial resources that are available to larger schools. This lack of funds and smaller school size limits the amount of personnel available for the PST to a member of the administration, a general education teacher, a special education teacher, and a school counselor, if the school employs one (Leadership Teaming Functions, 2019).

Upon student referral to the PST for Tier 3 supports, the team will review data on the student to develop an action plan for behavioral supports. This action plan, also called a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP), would consist of three fundamental structures,

1. Student data which documents and supports the necessity for behavioral supports.

2. A lesson plan and schedule for the interactions of supports and a detailed list of the behavioral modification activities with the student.

3. Continuous progress monitoring of student progress with the fidelity of supports (Leadership Teaming Functions, 2019).

Data gathered by and for the PST to develop the BIP originates from the following tools,

1. Attendance Records (Absences by Student),

2. Student discipline referrals to the office,

3. Systematic Screening for Behavior Disorders (SSBD),

4. Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS) Performance Screening Guide,

5. Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire,

6. Behavioral and Emotional Screening System (BESS),

7. Behavior Assessment System for Children Second Edition: Teacher Rating Scales BASC-2: TRS,

8. Student Risk Screening Scale (SRSS) – Drummond, 1994, and

9. Tier 2 intervention data (e.g., CICO progress data) (Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, 2019c).

Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP). A Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) is an individualized behavior plan, specific to each student's exact behavior needs. It is not necessary to conduct a BIP at the Tier 1 level, which is a school-wide initiative, occasionally is conducted on the Tier 2 level, and always conducted on the Tier 3 level. The first step in developing a BIP is to conduct a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) (Department of Special Education, 2006; IRIS Center, 2019; Jordan, 2019; Neitzel & Bogin, 2008; Richardson et al., 2018; von Ravensburg & Blakely, 2015). Details in the behaviors plan are fused from data gathered in three methods of assessments: continuous screening of data allowing for comparison; data which is divided into antecedent, time of incident which resulted in the problem behavior and the scene of incidence; and lastly intervention methods coupled with progress monitoring (Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, 2019b; Richardson et al., 2018). Once the FBA is analyzed, the behavior team will discuss the results and develop the BIP, transferring much of the FBA data into the BIP, to include the target desired behavior, motive for the new behavior, factors contributing to the undesired behavior and how it interferes with learning, how the expected behavior will be maintained, target date for achievement of replacement target behavior, and anticipated timeline to revisit and discuss the progression of target behavior

(Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, 2019a; Sugai, Lewis-Palmer, & Hagan, 1998).

Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA). Rooted within the Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) is the target behavior (desired behavior), the motive for the new behavior, contributing factors that sustain undesired behavior, and how the negative behavior interferes with the student's academic progression. The FBA also includes a path for sustaining the new behavior and what aspects of the interventions help facilitate the maintenance of the desired behavior as well as aspects that facilitate the negative behavior that is interfering with the student's educational progress (Department of Special Education, 2006; IRIS Center, 2019; Jordan, 2019; Neitzel & Bogin, 2008; Reitinger & Reinhardt, 2019; Sugai et al., 1998; von Ravensburg & Blakely, 2015). Examples of behavior that can impede learning include frequent talking to peers, drumming a pencil on the desk, refusing to sit in a chair for classwork, sleeping during class, monopolizing the class discussion, and persistent tardiness (Amada, 2019).

Once the problem behavior is identified, the next step is to determine why the problem behavior occurs, which is the antecedent. The following questions should be answered when determining the cause, or the why, of adverse behavior,

1. Location of occurrence;
2. Who were the people involved (peers and or adults);
3. What transpired just before the incident (predictors/antecedents);
4. What occurred immediately afterward (consequences);
5. Was any action taken to avert or intercede in the behavior;
6. What was the behavior resolution;

7. Potential motives for adverse behavior such as attention-seeking, task avoidance, and opposition to authority;

8. Classroom setting and learning tasks at the time of occurrence;

9. What pedagogical technique was the teacher implementing;

10. What is the classroom behavioral expectations; and

11. Have there been any recent variances in student's life in or out of school (Department of Special Education, 2006; IRIS Center, 2019; Jordan, 2019; Neitzel & Bogin, 2008; Richardson et al., 2018; Reitinger & Reinhardt, 2019).

The third step in the FBA process is for the team to develop alternative behaviors to replace the undesired behaviors and the steps for replacement. This final step in the FBA is the beginning of the PBIS intervention services, all of which will is incorporated in the BIP. Examples of interventions as replacements include environmental factors such as placement of student seating. An example of this is proximal seating, which is close to the teacher, away from another student, away from the window, and the like as well as modification in the delivery of pedagogy (Department of Special Education, 2006; IRIS Center, 2019; Jordan, 2019; Neitzel & Bogin, 2008; Reitinger & Reinhardt, 2019; von Ravensburg & Blakely, 2015).

Perceived Enablers and Barriers

Lack of understanding of how to implement PBIS and a lack of general knowledge of PBIS are two issues found to impede precise and sustainable PBIS procedures (Lohrmann et al., 2008; Pinkelman et al., 2015; Tyre & Feuerborn, 2017). In many instances, teachers receive a cursory hour-hour overview of PBIS in preservice professional development. According to Lohrmann et al. (2008), Pinkelman et al. (2015),

and Tyre and Feuerborn (2017), administrators and teachers should receive more than four hours of professional training for PBIS effectiveness. Previous studies indicate (Lohrmann et al., 2008; Pinkelman et al., 2015; Tyre & Feuerborn, 2017) expression of disdain from teachers when utilizing PBIS procedures, often communicating a feeling that students should come to school knowing acceptable social behaviors (Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, 2018). When teachers have this mindset, failing to understand student familial background, it can lead to adverse interactions between students and teachers. “Negative teacher-student relationships and structural inadequacies affect the student’s ability to learn and develop positive relationships with their local environment and superiors” (Buck & Deutsch, 2014, p. 1140). Seeing and understanding the value in PBIS from teachers is an essential aspect of the effectiveness of its implementation and sustainability (Lohrmann et al., 2008; Pinkelman et al., 2015; Tyre & Feuerborn, 2017; Woodall, 2017).

Teacher Perception of PBIS

Research has indicated that teachers' perceptions of implementing and sustaining PBIS fall well short of enthusiasm (Lohrmann et al., 2008; Pinkelman et al., 2015; Tyre & Feuerborn, 2017). The most significant obstacles noted were a lack of knowledge on how to implement PBIS and how to sustain the implementation over time (Lohrmann et al., 2008; Pinkelman et al., 2015; Tyre & Feuerborn, 2017). In many school systems, PBIS training is constrained to a four-hour professional development held the week before students’ arrival. According to Lohrmann et al. (2008), Pinkelman et al. (2015), and Tyre and Feuerborn (2017), effective implementation and sustainability of PBIS requires more than four hours of in-service training, preferably ongoing training and

professional supports offered throughout the school year. Pessimistic sentiments amongst students and teachers are often a result of teachers' convictions that students should come to school already knowing appropriate behaviors (Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, 2018). This negative interaction has a cyclic effect on student learning and achievement, translating into lower academics and defiance towards authority figures (Buck & Deutsch, 2014). Effective PBIS implementation requires teacher buy-in and support; teachers should see the value in using and implementing PBIS in their classroom and the school (Lohrmann et al., 2008; Pinkelman et al., 2015; Tyre & Feuerborn, 2017).

Professional Development

It is common knowledge amongst those in the education profession that one must complete a required amount of professional development each year (Aldahmash, Alshamrani, Alshaya, & Alsarrani, 2019). Many begrudgingly attend in-service training before the school year begins, while others eagerly attend workshops specifically designed to their area of interest. Teachers who eagerly anticipate preservice PD include special education, math, science, language arts, art, etcetera, while still others attend professional development as a means to renew their teacher certification.

However, professional development is often "too short and too rare to foster a change in teachers' classroom practices" (Aldahmash et al., 2019, p. 164) usually only lasting a few short hours to all day (Wood, Goodnight, Bethune, Preston, & Cleaver, 2016). Likewise, Wood et al. (2016) found that many teachers express a feeling of unpreparedness in implementing PBIS, let alone sustaining it throughout the school year. Wood et al. (2016) found that the feeling in unpreparedness stems from a "lack of general education curricula featuring an instructional design that supports students at risk, and a

lack of professional development to meet the needs of struggling students" (p. 160). Another issue discovered was a feeling that the professional development offered to teachers did not meet the specific need of their students and lacked necessary provisions that would aid in implementing the practices just learned (Wood et al., 2016).

According to Aldahmash et al. (2019), efficacious professional development includes opportunities for formal and informal professional development, time for ongoing professional development (time built into the daily work schedule), and activities rooted in teachers' daily and weekly routines. Aldahmas et al. (2019) also stated professional development should include school structures that support the involvement of all staff, structures within the school that support teachers' decisions in curriculum and instructional practices, and mentoring programs for new teachers. Aldahmash et al. (2019) and Wood et al. (2016) also described the characteristics of active professional development:

1. Classroom-based training,
2. Utilizes outside experts,
3. Teacher involvement in creations of professional development activities,
4. Opportunities for teachers to do collaborative work with peers, and
5. Ongoing training offered throughout the school year (Aldahmash et al., 2019; Wood et al., 2016).

They believe that without the above practices, professional development will result in fragmentation and ineffectual attempts at implementation (Wood et al., 2016).

For some teachers, one-day professional development can prove effectual. Nevertheless, others would benefit from ongoing professional development and

continuous supports throughout the year from expert coaches. These can include novice teachers and teachers learning new skills, such as those found in PBIS (Wood et al., 2016). Expert coaches are tasked with classroom observations, modeling techniques, and providing feedback for implementation (Wood et al., 2016). Wood et al. (2016) described three types of effectual, sustained coaching for learning and implementing new PBIS strategies, and those are (a) supervisory coaching, (b) side-by-side coaching, and (c) multi-level coaching. Supervisory coaching should be conducted by a school administrator or expert coaches. It consists of observing a teacher implementing new strategies, recording data on methods and effectiveness of the implementation, then providing immediate feedback to the teacher of strengths and opportunities for improvement (Reinke, Herman & Stormont, 2013; Wood et al., 2016). Side-by-side coaching "occurs when the coach provides in vivo feedback specific to the accuracy of implementation of identified teaching behaviors" (Wood et al., 2016, p. 163). Here the coach observes the teacher and provides intervention during the process, modeling desired techniques to the teacher, then returning the situation/lesson to the teacher, rather than providing feedback at a later time (Wood et al., 2016). Side-by-side coaching was shown to be particularly beneficial when implementing new PBIS procedures, particularly with students displaying severe, challenging behaviors (Wood et al., 2016). Multi-level coaching is a combination of professional development before the initiation of a new program, such as PBIS, follow-up supervisory coaching, and side-by-side coaching. Several studies cited by Wood et al. (2016), indicated that although not all teachers required multi-level coaching, some significantly benefited from multi-level, sustained coaching in order to incorporate newly learned procedures for PBIS.

State professional development guidelines. Each state is responsible for the development of professional development for all educators. They are tasked with ensuring these professional developments meet mandated federal requirements, listed in IDEA, NCLB, and now ESSA. The state in which the study will be conducted has the following professional development requirements which count towards teacher certification renewal:

1. Three years of full-time educational experience and 50 clock hours of professional development,

2. Three years of full-time educational experience and three semester hours of college or university credit,

3. 50 clock hours of professional development and three semester hours of college or university credit,

4. Six semester hours of college or university credit, and

5. Certification from the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) earned during the valid period of the Professional Educator Certificate that the teacher currently holds (Alabama Department of Education, 2019).

This state has based its core standards for teacher professional development on values established in NCLB Title IX, Section 9101 (34). Of the twelve standards listed for this state, one is explicitly designed to meet the needs and requirements for PBIS, “Effective professional development prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students, create safe, orderly and supportive learning environments, and hold high expectations for their academic achievement” (Alabama State Department of Education, 2002, p. 1).

PBIS professional development. Before conducting PBIS professional development, it is essential facilitators of professional development training assess the school environment. The assessment should identify specific needs and barriers they viewed in implementing PBIS. Also, facilitators should identify resources and strategies to overcoming any noted barriers; create a game plan for delivery of the professional development that will increase the likelihood of PBIS implementation and supports, and allowing for evaluations of the impact of and outcomes of PBIS training and implantation (Mitchem & Richard, 2003). Results from Mitchem and Richard's 2003 study of a rural school district discovered several perceived barriers to effective PBIS implementation and sustainability. The barriers include, (a) lack of time to provide professional development opportunities, (b) lack of financial resources, (c) high teacher attrition rates, (d) a large number of underqualified, and (e) unqualified teachers. Mitchem and Richard (2003) found wide-ranging opinions that PBIS was just for special education students, a common view favoring punishment for misbehavior. Finally, they found a prevailing thought in favor of punishment for inappropriate behavior, such as reactionist behavior towards undesired student behavior, over that of preventative measures, which includes establishing techniques to deter inappropriate behaviors before it occurs (Mitchem & Richard, 2003).

It is ideal that, when a school system has decided to implement PBIS procedures officially, all school staff are given PBIS implementation training (Professional Development, 2017). Also, it is recommended that PBIS is implemented system-wide and in individual classrooms. As such, instructional and non-instructional staff should be equipped to deliver Tier 1 interventions. They should also be cognizant of when referral

of a student to Tier 2 or 3 interventions is necessary (Professional Development, 2017). Professional development for Tier 2 interventions does not mandate the inclusion of all teachers and staff, preferably only a small few who are designated to implement it. Professional development for Tier 3 implementation, also, will be limited to an even smaller group of teachers and administrators since Tier 3 is limited to approximately 5% of the student population (Professional Development, 2017). Professional development for both Tier 2 and Tier 3 should be more in-depth because these students will need more stringent interventions. Once initial training has completed, teachers and staff should be able to answer their tier-specific questions, as well as understand the district's policies and PBIS procedures (Professional Development, 2017).

Initial professional development training for PBIS should include classroom arrangement allowing for successful implementation. This arrangement will include the positioning of furniture, class routines, and classroom rules (Professional Development, 2017). Initial training should also include two types of behavior practices, and those are preventative and response. Preventive practices consist of procedures that deter undesirable and adverse behavior such as teacher redirection, child proximity to the teacher, and behavior-specific praise. Also, response practices, statements given by the teacher to the student, are given at the onset of the undesired behavior. The teacher will explicitly state the observed behavior then explain to the student expected, desired behaviors for the future (Professional Development, 2017).

Once federals embedded PBIS into mandates and policies, schools began to see a rise in district-wide policies and procedures for the use of PBIS in each of its schools. However, despite the increased application of PBIS, many teachers continue to struggle

with student classroom behavior, expressing student behavior is the most challenging aspect of their job, but the area in which they receive the least amount of training (Reinke et al., 2013). Research indicates that when classroom behavior is poorly managed, then student academics suffer and is a significant contributing factor for high teacher burnout rates. Teacher burnout has a direct correlation to the perceived efficacy of skills (Reinke et al., 2013). “Teachers’ belief about their efficacy have been identified as a factor that strongly influences their implementation of new interventions” (Reinke et al., 2013, p. 40). It is surmised that revealing the perception of teacher efficacy can point to teachers in need of additional and sustained training, particularly those reporting low efficacy (Reinke et al., 2013).

National technical assistance center. To assist school districts with the development of PBIS professional development, the Department of Education established an office dedicated to PBIS training, The National Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, established in 1997 (Lewis et al., 2016). The primary resolve of the PBIS Center is the collection and distribution of evidence-based behavioral interventions and practices. The collection and distribution of information will expand “the social behavior development, school climate, and safety of all students, especially students who are at risk of or display problem behavior within the school context” (Lewis et al., 2016, p. 3). It places great significance on the approbation and implementation of PBIS mechanisms within an organized, structured approach. This structured approach is delineated by “(a) data-based decision making, (b) team-based coordination and implementation, (c) fidelity and integrity of implementation, (d)

continuum of evidence-based decision making, (e) continuous progress monitoring, and (f) regular universal screening" (Lewis et al., 2016, p. 3).

The primary focus of the Center is providing support in training and professional development, coaching, and technical assistance, and local content expertise. The Center's proposed clients of the Blueprint include administrators and teachers, human resource personnel that are designated trainers, and other professional development trainers (Lewis et al., 2016). The Blueprint is divided into three sections, (a) the establishment of a proficient professional development system, (b) decisions towards the core content of the PBIS professional development, and (c) the development of a skill set to engage participants in the professional development (see Figure 2).

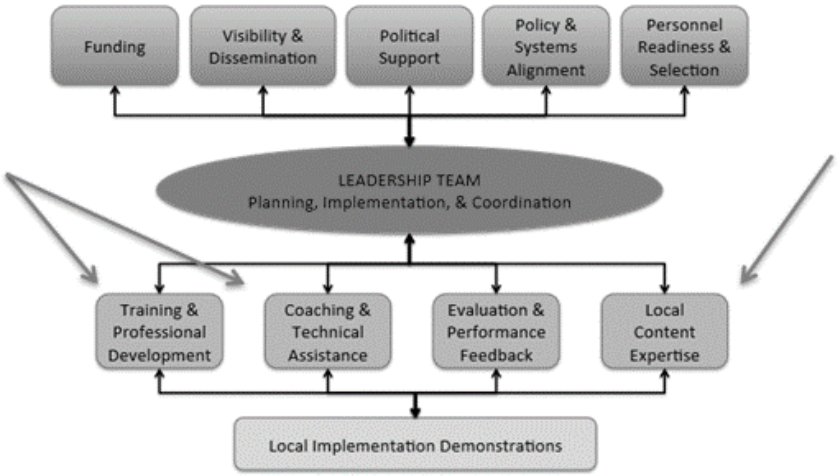

Figure 2. Training & Professional Development Blueprint for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports.

Establishment of an effective professional development system. Preceding PBIS professional development training, the school leadership team and or district leaders will evaluate the district and or school's readiness level of implementation. Efficacious implementation of PBIS will necessitate district and school leadership teams to engage in five phases of evaluation of readiness and implementation,

1. “Exploration and Adoption–Securing agreement within the school to pursue a change in practice and self-assessing capacity to implement;

2. Installation-Establishing initial systems, data-decisions, and practices that will be required to implement PBIS to the degree change in student behavior is evident;

3. Initial Implementation-Targeting an element within the tier to allow all within the school to begin implementation on a manageable scale;

4. Full Implementation-Operating all systemic components and a range of interventions that are responsive to patterns noted within the school’s data; and

5. Innovation and Sustainability-Revising and updating practices and systems to sustain student outcomes within each tier in response to changes in student behaviors, significant staff or administration turn-over, or other challenges that often affect school implementation efforts” (Lewis et al., 2016, p. 7-8).

To effectively design and implement PBIS professional development, district leaders must recognize, assess, and design supports that are constructed on school readiness along with all professional development activities of each phase of implementation within individual tiers of PBIS. Following all professional development activities, quantifiable results should reflect the fidelity of team implementation as well as behavioral outcomes that are desirable and measurable (Lewis et al., 2016).

Decisions towards the core content of PBIS professional development. This section of the Blueprint lists core components to be included in the initial professional development and modifications for ongoing training. Initial training should encompass, PBIS definition and Fundamental components of PBIS. The fundamental components consist of, (expected student behavior schoolwide and in the classroom, teaching

expected behavior, recognition of students displaying expected behavior, discouragement of inappropriate behavior, data-driven decisions), implementation of Blueprint features (fidelity, continuum of evidence-based interventions, continuous progress monitoring, culturally relevant procedure), rationale for implementation (improving school discipline and anticipated outcomes), costs of implementation, steps to begin implementation, administrative support (Lewis et al., 2016).

Development of skill sets. The final process in the Center's Blueprint for PBIS professional development is the development of teacher skill sets. The following list should be included in the ongoing professional development of PBIS,

1. How to establish a connection between Tier 1 and Tier 2 within the curriculum;
2. Define the procedures for identifying students in need of Tier 2 and Tier 3 services;
3. Clarification of the basics of Applied Behavioral Analysis data collection (ABC – Antecedent, Behavior, Consequence);
4. Provide examples of how to progress-monitor PBIS implementation with students on Tier 2 and Tier 3;
5. Provide examples of how to define problem behaviors;
6. Examples of FBA and BIP; and
7. Provide resources available to the teacher and student within the school, the district, and the community (Lewis et al., 2016).

Based on government regulations, state education systems and local school systems find themselves in search of research-based programs. It is the thought that only research-based programs know best when it pertains to the academics and behaviors of

students (Murphy, 2019). While research-based programs do show progression in academics and behavior, it fails to address the root issue of teacher perception of the program and how they perceive their training for the implementation and sustainability of PBIS (Murphy, 2019). Gaining their perceptions will assist in the fidelity of PBIS (Schwartz, 2019).

Research Questions

The guiding question of this study was to discern what teachers perceive to be the most critical enablers and barriers in implementing and sustaining of PBIS in Grades K-5. This question is subdivided into the following sub-questions:

Research Question 1. What do teachers perceive as the most critical enablers for implementing PBIS?

Research Question 2. What do teachers perceive as the most significant barrier to implementing PBIS?

Research Question 3. What do teachers perceive as the most critical enablers for sustaining PBIS?

Research Question 4. What do teachers perceive as the most significant barrier in sustaining PBIS?

The researcher accomplished this exploration through a triangulation of semi-structured teacher interviews, field notes, and audio recordings.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore teachers' perceived enablers and barriers in the implementation and sustainability of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in a Rural K-8 school, with emphasis placed on Grades K-5. Derived from the assumption that there are enablers and barriers arise from many personal conversations with general education teachers in a previous school district where the researcher works as a Special Education teacher.

Disruptive behaviors in the classroom are increasing at an exponential rate (Burke, Oats, Ringle, Fichtner, & DelGaudio, 2011; Dalgiç & Bayhan, 2014; Shun & Shek, 2012). These disruptive behaviors range from minor infractions such as talking in class and tardiness to more serious infractions such as violence against another student or teacher and vandalism (Shun & Shek, 2012). To help combat these behaviors, the federal government embedded regulations for school systems to follow, employing PBIS procedures (About IDEA, 2018). Included in this is teacher training for application (§1454 Use of funds, (a)(3)(B)(iii)(I), §1462 Personnel Development to improve services and results for children with disabilities, (a)(6)(D), §1462 Personnel Development to improve services and results for children with disabilities, (a)(7)(B), §1465 Interim alternative educational settings, behavioral supports, and systemic school interventions, (b)(1)(B, C). Research has demonstrated distinctly perceived enablers and barriers to the implementation and sustaining of PBIS (Bethune, 2017; Lohrmann et al., 2008; Pinkelman et al., 2015).

Teachers are the frontline in implementing and ensuring the sustainability of PBIS

in the classroom (Schwartz, 2019). As such, it is essential to allow for the pronunciation of their opinions regarding their perceptions of the best means to implement and sustain PBIS. Affording teachers opportunities to express their opinions in implementing and sustaining PBIS procedures allows for teacher buy-in and ownership in procedures.

Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the PBIS experiences of teachers and the meaning these experiences have for them. To gain an understanding of teacher perception in implementing and sustaining PBIS strategies, the researcher developed four questions:

Research Question 1. What do teachers perceive as the most critical enablers for implementing PBIS?

Research Question 2. What do teachers perceive as the most significant barrier to implementing PBIS?

Research Question 3. What do teachers perceive as the most critical enablers for sustaining PBIS?

Research Question 4. What do teachers perceive as the most significant barrier in sustaining PBIS?

Design

A qualitative case study design was chosen for this study. Qualitative research aims to understand a situation from the perspective of a research participant **(**Locke, Silverman, & Spirduso, 2010). Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that understanding participant perspective "begins with assumptions and the of interpreting theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning

individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 8). Characteristics of qualitative research include:

1. Occurring in the natural world,
2. Drawing on multiple methods of interacting and gathering data from participants,
3. Focusing on context,
4. Loosely configured, relying on the evolution of facts, and
5. Inherently expositive (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

This research followed a case study design. Case studies revolve around gaining a deep understanding of a phenomenon that is experienced by study participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In a case study,

> the investigator explores real-life, contemporary bounded system (case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual materials, and documents and reports a case description and case themes. (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 96-97)

Two key features of a case study are in-depth participant interviews and the development of themes derived from data gathered during the interviews. The interviews are transcribed, and from the transcriptions, the interviewer/researcher begins to form a picture of the perceived experiences of participants. The picture is then formed into a full description of the phenomenon studied for others to read and replicate (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Locke et al., 2010).

Participants

Participants for this qualitative case study were selected from a population of elementary teachers in a rural Northern Alabama school district. This school district is relatively small, consisting of 18 schools and employing approximately 627 teachers, principals, and assistant principals (Morgan County School District, 2019). “Purposive sampling is a non-representative subset of some larger population” (University of California, Davis, 2014, p. 2) and was used to recruit at least 15 rural elementary teachers. Participants for this study were purposively selected from one of these elementary schools. This particular school employs 26 teachers, Grades PreK-8. However, selected participants stemmed from Grades K-5, resulting in approximately 15 participants.

Permission for the study was gained from the District Superintendent as well as the school principal. Once study permission was gained, participants were emailed a request to participate letter. The letter stated the purpose of the study, the researcher’s role, the length of time to conduct each interview, the setting of each interview, the option to participate or not participate, and the confidentiality statement. Once participants returned the agreement to participate form, via signing and returning the request letter, each was interviewed. It was anticipated that the research timeframe would not extend longer than six weeks. Participants were interviewed during their planning period. Using their planning period allowed limited to no distractions. Each planning period lasted for 50 minutes. Each interview lasted for approximately 40 minutes, thereby allowing for the overflow of time if necessary. During the interview process, the researcher also conducted observations of each participant to gather additional information from body language and voice tone inflection.

Data Collection Tools

Data collection for this study consisted of in-depth face-to-face open-ended interview questions, which served as the primary data collection instrument (Anderson-Saunders, 2016). Interviews were used to gain the perceptions of K-5 teachers at a rural elementary public school in a southern state, seeking their perception on the implementation and sustainability of the PBIS framework in their classroom and within the school. The interview questions (Anderson-Saunders, 2016) were designed to answer a central guiding research question and four sub-questions. The interview was designed to foster open communication between the researcher and the participants (see Appendix D). The researcher ensured that all questions were open-ended, allowing for a more in-depth and thorough exploration of the topic.

Observation of participants during the interview process were used to collect additional information, thereby assisting the researcher in a better understanding of participant answers. Observations sought information on participant body language and voice inflection or pauses between answers. Observing body language and voice inflections revealed participant comfort levels as well as stressors that may have occurred during the interview process. The researcher provided opportunities for clarification of answers by reflecting answers to participants. Finally, the researcher also implemented a researcher journal that allowed for self-reflection to mitigate any potential biases.

Procedures

Research regulations stipulate the completion of the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) before beginning any study. This training ensures the protection, safety, and anonymity of participants. The researcher completed CITI

training in November 2018 (see Appendix E). Approval to conduct the study had to be gained from the school district Superintendent first. Once this approval was given, the researcher then sought approval of research from the school Principal. Each received a letter requesting permission to conduct the study. The letter included the location of the study, the purpose of the study, how participant anonymity would transpire, and a guarantee to share results once the study was completed. Each approval letter was provided to Nova Southeastern University (NSU) IRB as supporting documentation. In order to safeguard the confidentiality of participants, all identifying information that could ascertain the identity of the school and participants was omitted from the dissertation or any future study reports. However, all signed documents with the contact information of the superintendent and school principal, including their signatures, was sent to NSUs IRB.

Upon approval from NSUs IRB, potential participants were emailed an invitation letter to participate in the main study, a total of 15 potential participants. Because the researcher is a special education teacher at the site school, there was no exclusion to participate by any elementary general education teacher. Potential participants were informed of their opportunity to ask questions about the study by email, telephone, or face-to-face before signing the consent to participate form.

As the researcher received signed consent forms from participants, the researcher contacted each person to set up an appointment time, which is convenient for that person, to conduct the semi-structured interview. Each interview was conducted in a private conference room, which is in the office of the elementary school. Each interview took no more than 45 minutes to complete and was audiotaped

for accurate transcription. Before ending each interview, the researcher addressed participants' questions and or concerns and thanked each participant for their participation in the study.

Upon completion of all interviews, the researcher transcribed responses, searching for themes in their replies. After receiving full approval for the dissertation research was received, participants were emailed a report summary detailing the findings. The District Superintendent and school Principal also received a copy of the findings. Data is secured in a locked filing cabinet and password-protected computer. The researcher is the only person with access to records. Data will be kept for a least 36 months per NSU policy.

Analysis

Aronson (1994) stated that "thematic analysis focuses on identifiable themes and patterns of living and or behavior" (p. 1). Aronson lists four steps to performing thematic analysis. The first step is to collect data via transcriptions from recorded interviews. It is from the transcriptions that patterns begin to emerge. The second step in conducting thematic analysis is to ascertain all data that relate to the previously categorized patterns and then explicate upon these patterns into themes. The third step is to combine the developed data patterns and catalog them into subcategories or themes. These themes surface from the descriptions participants tell the researcher and are organized to form an inclusive depiction of their shared experiences. The final step in the thematic analysis is for the researcher to build an argument for the themes which he believes emerge from the data he collected. The argument is conducted through thorough research of related research literature. The researcher's thematic data is then

combined with the related research literature into a storyline for the reader (Aronson, 1994).

A thematic analysis was used on the participant interviews. Open-ended questions in the form of semi-structured interviews assisted in guiding the researcher towards informational themes while also ensuring new ideas and meanings had an opportunity to be presented. NVivo computer software was used to organize the data. Once this organization of the data was complete, the researcher began coding the responses of the participants. For coding purposes, a preset protocol was used that is based on specified terms such as professional development, administrative support, and finances. The researcher then proceed to the formal data analysis phase combined with thorough research of literature from previous studies, thereby providing a full description and a vivid picture of teacher perceptions on PBIS implementation and sustainability.

Ethical Considerations

The CITI human protections training was completed before data collection. The researcher abided by all federal and state regulations and conducted the study in accordance with Nova Southeastern University IRB guidelines to ensure research participants' ethical protection. Before beginning data collection, all participants were emailed a consent form to obtain their permission to participate in the main study. The consent form described the voluntary participation of the participants and their ability to withdraw from the study at any time. Also, the consent form informed participants of the confidentiality of their participation as well as their responses. Numbers were assigned to each participant, and all identifying information were excluded from the

study's report. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study and how they wiould receive a summary report of the findings. Participants were also be provided with an additional layer of anonymity by ensuring that the identity of the school, as well as their personal identity, remains confidential.

Participants were informed about audio-taping their interviews and the verbatim transcription, which were made and analyzed. The researcher kept the audio recorded interviews secured in a locked cabinet until they were transcribed and then replaced in the locked cabinet. The researcher is the only person with access to the key or code for the cabinet. These will remain in the researcher's possession for at least 36 months, per Nova Southeastern University guidelines, at which point the information will be disposed of. The researcher's supervising committee will only be allowed access to the data. The researcher provided all participants with contact information to include the researcher's Nova Southeastern University email address as well as phone number should they have additional questions or concerns during the study and upon study completion. Once the study was completed, each participant was emailed a summary report of the research findings.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research is defined as "…the goodness of qualitative research" (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 43). Marshall and Rossman (2016) postulated that for research to be considered trustworthy, it must answer the questions of believability:

1. "Do we believe in the claims that a research report puts forward?
2. On what grounds do we judge these as credible?

3. What evidence is presented to support the claims?

4. How do we evaluate that evidence?

5. Are the claims potentially useful for the problems we are concerned with" (p. 44).

Also, according to Shelton (2004) and Marshall and Rossman (2016), four criteria must be met to ensure soundness or trustworthiness in qualitative research, (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability. Credibility in a study has a predilection to internal validity. A study's transferability relates to its external validity, whereas dependability refers to a study's reliability. Finally, confirmability is in preference to the study's objectivity (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Shenton, 2004). Each of these four has its definable characteristics that must be met for research to be classified as trustworthy.

Credibility refers to the specific procedures used in the research and is considered one of the more central aspects of developing the trustworthiness of a research study. Procedures towards trustworthiness include the questions the research seeks to answer as well as the method in which data is gathered and analyzed. Shenton offers fourteen steps to ensuring credibility:

1. Implementation of research procedures that have been previously established;

2. Gain familiarity and understanding with the research site and participants before research transpires to assist in facilitating a trusting relationship with participants;

3. Utilize random sampling of participants to help minimize potential researcher bias;

4. Use triangulation during the study which could include different data collection methods such as interviews, observations, and focus groups;

5. Interview measures to ensure participant honesty, opportunities for the participant to refuse to participate or withdraw participation;

6. Iterative questioning;

7. Continuous refinement of a hypothesis until it addresses results from data;

8. Frequently debriefing participants to ensure investigator understood participant responses correctly;

9. Peer examination;

10. Reflective commentary of the researcher throughout the project, use of researcher journaling;

11. Background information of the investigator to include experience;

12. Checks from the investigator's member;

13. A thick description of the phenomenon under investigation; and

14. A thorough examination of prior research that pertains to the investigation (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Shenton, 2004).

Next is the transferability of the study. This centers around the results of the data gathered. It answers the question, "Can the results be transferred or applied to other situations?" Following transferability is the dependability of the study. Dependability is displayed when the study can be replicated by other researchers in the same context with identical methodology and similar participants. Finally, conformability seeks to reduce investigator bias by the use of triangulation of checks during the investigation and

ensuring that the “findings are the results of the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher” (Shenton, 2004, p. 72).

The researcher ensured trustworthiness in the study by implementing a triangulation of the methods listed above. First, the researcher employed frequent debriefing of participants to ensure an understanding of their responses to the interview questions. The researcher also used thick descriptions until saturation of data had been achieved. The researcher also sought peer examination, which afforded a fresh perspective, thereby challenging any assumptions which might have been presented during the data analysis. Finally, the researcher engaged in reflexivity through the use of investigator journaling. In addition to the methods mentioned above, all participants had the opportunity to either not participate or to withdraw from participation once the study began.

Potential Researcher Bias/Role of Researcher

The researcher is a certified special education teacher for Grades K-5 who is currently a teacher with the school and a co-worker of participants. However, the researcher did not have a supervisory role over participants. Since the researcher is employed with participants, there is the potential for researcher bias. The researcher served as the researcher, conducting in-depth interviews of this qualitative case study, making the researcher the primary research instrument. To minimize any potential bias, the researcher utilized self-reflection and self-examination of the researcher’s experiences regarding each interview process, remaining cognizant of the researcher’s perceptions as they arose. Recordings of all interviews supported any hand-written notes the researcher took during each interview, allowing for further self-reflection and self-examination,

thereby reducing any potential for bias.

Limitations

Limitations exist with most research methodologies. The first potential limitation or criticism of the study stems from the homogeneous nature of the participants. This potential limitation is due to the limited diversity of potential participants. This rural community lacks a diverse ethnic population, which may impede its transferability to similar populations of rural elementary school teachers in other small, rural communities or larger, rural communities. A second criticism of the study revolves around the transferability of the results in other regions of the United States. This study was conducted in a small rural community in a southern state. Findings may not translate to other communities within the United States, specifically other rural communities in the north, east, or west. A third criticism revolves around the small sample size of participants. Larger sample sizes could increase the divergent elements of the study. However, an increased number of participants could decrease quality interview time, thereby resulting in a more perfunctory report. Lastly, during the interview process, participants may feel apprehensive in revealing their real perceptions of PBIS implementation and sustainability, opting to answer more positively rather than honestly. In the end, the potential limitations of this study did not avert the researcher from presenting a high-quality case study that illustrates the perceptual trends discovered through the research questions.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

Exploring rural elementary teachers' perceptions of what enables and inhibits the implementation and sustainability of Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) was the purpose of this qualitative case study. This rural school is considered K-8. However, an emphasis was placed on Grades K-5. The researcher analyzed data from face-to-face interviews, field notes, and audio recordings. The utilization of multiple resources permitted the researcher to produce a thorough narrative with rich dialogue from participants. Each participant voiced personal experiences in implementing PBIS in their classroom as well as schoolwide. Each participant also voiced personal experiences in sustaining PBIS in their classroom and on a schoolwide basis. The core question that steered the study was to ascertain what teachers perceive to be the most critical enablers and barriers in implementing and sustaining of PBIS in Grades K-5. The following questions supported the core question:

Research Question 1. What do teachers perceive as the most critical enablers for implementing PBIS?

Research Question 2. What do teachers perceive as the most significant barrier to implementing PBIS?

Research Question 3. What do teachers perceive as the most critical enablers for sustaining PBIS?

Research Question 4. What do teachers perceive as the most significant barrier in sustaining PBIS?

The focus of this study was to present participants' perceptions of PBIS

implementation and sustainability authentically. The chapter opens with the demographic characteristics of the participants. Study findings will follow participant demographics. Findings are presented in themes with categories and sub-themes that emerged from the data analysis process in conjunction with extensive details and supporting evidence. Evidence is presented in the form of participant quotes, charts which will be found after each theme is discussed, and graphs that are listed in the appendices. Themes, categories, and sub-themes were established from the emergence of data displayed from the interviews.

Participants

An invitation to participate was extended to 13 teachers. Seven teachers agreed to participate in this study. Participants in this study were all teachers in a rural elementary school, teaching in grades one through five. Each participant was assigned a number to protect their identity (see Table 1). All participants were Caucasian females. Four teachers taught in the general education classroom, while three taught *specials*. *Specials* within this school district include art class, music/band, special education, reading intervention, gifted program, and English Language Learners (ELL). Total teaching experience varied amongst participants, ranging from novice, one year, to experienced, 25 years. Total teaching years at the study site also varied, ranging from first-year teaching to 10 years. Variations were also noted in the education level of participants. Three teachers hold a bachelor's degree. One participant holds a master's degree, and three hold an Education Specialist (EdS) Degree. All participants fully participated; none withdrew.

Table 1

Demographic Breakdown of the Participants

Participants	Gender	Race	Grade taught	Years at study school	Total years' teaching	Education level
1	Female	Caucasian	1	10	10	EdS
2	Female	Caucasian	5	7	12	EdS
3	Female	Caucasian	3 – 5	2	25	BS
4	Female	Caucasian	4	3	16	MS
5	Female	Caucasian	4	1	1	BS
6	Female	Caucasian	K – 5	1	2	BS
7	Female	Caucasian	K – 5	3	17	MS

Note: BS=Bachelor of Science; MS= Master of Science; EdS= Educational Specialist.

Interviews were scheduled with the teachers by email at a time that was convenient for each participant. The interview process was conducted over a five-week timeframe. Each interview transpired during the participant's planning period in her classroom and lasted approximately 40-45 minutes. Utilizing the participant's planning period allowed for full concentration on questions that were free from distractions. Before initiating the interview, the researcher shared the purpose of the study and the participant's role in the research study. To help ensure anonymity and confidentiality, participants were asked to exclude all identifying information. Identifying information included participant names, school names, names of colleagues, and administrators. Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. The use of open-ended interview questions permitted each participant to answer without restrictions or sway from the researcher. Furthermore, utilizing open-ended questions afforded the researcher opportunities to ask

clarifying questions, thereby delving deeper to provide thick, rich descriptions of participant perceptions. Interview questions can be located in Table 2 and Appendix D.

Table 2

Core Interview Open-Ended Questions

Interview Protocol Questions
How do you see the PBIS framework in improving students' behavior and socialization in rural elementary schools?
How are you implementing it in your classroom? How would you use the PBIS framework to decrease undesirable behavior?
How do you think school personnel perceives PBIS as a useful tool in achieving desired outcomes?
Can you tell me how you feel PBIS training prepared you to implement PBIS in the school?
What are your perceptions of how PBIS develops prosocial behaviors in students?
Can you give me examples of what you feel are limitations of the PBIS framework?
Can you think of examples you feel would help improve the implementation and sustainability of PBIS?
How could PBIS be easier to implement?
How do you feel about the school in general as being knowledgeable in implementing and sustaining PBIS?
What are your thoughts on PBIS being critical and needed for schools and changing behaviors?
What are your perceptions of the adequacy of district resources that are allocated for PBIS?
How do you view district administration actively supporting PBIS?
What do you see as the most significant thing that allows you to implement and sustain PBIS in your classroom?
What do you believe is the most significant barrier to you implementing and sustaining PBIS?
What you believe are the most significant enablers and barriers schoolwide?
Interview probes that will be used during interviews:
Please give me an example.
Please tell me more about…

Transcription was conducted on all participant interviews for the data analysis. The researcher then began the process of analysis and cross-referencing transcriptions and field notes to determine any themes which appeared. Following the determination of themes, the researcher entered the data into the NVIVO qualitative data analysis software. NVIVO software was used to aid in the organization and coding of data. To facilitate this process, the researcher input raw data from interview transcripts then compressed them into codes. These codes were then grouped into themes presented during the initial analysis phase, all of which were related to individual research questions.

Findings

In the findings section, the researcher provides a summation of the findings. This summation includes detailed results in the four themes with the same two categories, followed by results from the three sub-themes. The themes are (a) critical enablers for implementing PBIS, (b) significant barriers to implementing PBIS, (c) critical enablers for sustaining PBIS, and (d) significant barrier in sustaining PBIS, which had two categories. The first category was professional development (PD) and the other was teacher buy-in. Sub-themes are effectiveness, time, and communication. Following each theme result are tables, which were generated from the researcher coding participant interviews. Once coding was complete, the researcher then ran a comparison of participants to themes to determine how many instances a theme (major or minor) was discussed.

Theme 1. The first theme was critical enablers for implementing PBIS. Findings indicate that teachers perceive that the PBIS framework's effectiveness is tied with initial

and sustained professional development (PD). Participants equally expressed teacher buy-in as critical in implementing PBIS (see Table 3 and Appendix F)).

Category 1. The first category is professional development (PD). Of the seven participants, all seven participants indicated PD as needed from the onset (before school resumes in August), followed by sustained PD and mentor check-ins throughout the school year. Participant 5 conveyed,

> "I would think that we would need some professional development. I think that there would have to be a lot of professional development and showing the benefits of it. And I think that if we had people to come, that was using this effectively from another system, another school, to come to share their stories, to show things that have worked so that there's a reason to believe there's something else that they can do than what they've always done."

Participant 7 reiterated the perceptions of Participant 5 by expressing in detail her feelings on PD for PBIS.

> "I feel like I've had adequate training to implement that right now, but it definitely would help everybody in the school. I believe if we were to implement it, the training should be ongoing for teachers, making it consistent. This way, we're always all on the same page about what we're doing so that when a student goes to another classroom next year, the same procedures are in place. It's not something that's changing every year. But I also feel that PD should be dependent on the needs of the staff. It could be a half-day or a whole day, whatever we needed. I don't know where everybody else in the school would be on that topic too, so. It would be nice to have somebody professional come in and train the

> whole staff and kind of keep up with that throughout the year, do a train the trainer type thing. Then every three to six months, all of us revisit what we're implementing and reflect what's working, what's not working, and how we can fix it. It needs to be done before it's actually implemented so that people aren't just being trained and expected the next day to implement something that they're not familiar with."

Category 2. The second category is teacher buy-in. Participants expressed teacher buy-in as critical in implementing PBIS. Participant 4 voiced,

> "It would take a whole school, you know, implementation of it, a buying into it for it to be fully sustained. But if this is something that sounds like it will really work, I think it would be extremely beneficial for us."

Table 3

Critical Enablers for Implementing PBIS

Participants	PD	Teacher buy-in
1	3	6
2	1	0
3	5	2
4	5	2
5	4	6
6	3	7
7	6	2

Theme 2. The second theme is significant barriers to implementing PBIS. Both categories ranked high with the participants regarding what they perceive to be the most significant barrier to implementing the PBIS framework. All seven participants indicated on multiple occasions that a lack of any PD is a constraint in effectively implementing PBIS in their classroom and schoolwide (see Table 4 and Appendix G). This perception

is supported from previous studies which indicated that a lack of knowledge and understanding on how to practice the PBIS framework are two issues hindering a successful implementation, leaving many teachers perplexed to the terminology, why the implementation is needed, and the steps associated with the implementation of it (Bethune, 2017; Lohrmann et al. 2008; Pinkelman et al. 2015; Tyre & Feuerborn, 2017).

Category 1. The first category is Professional development (PD). Participant 5 conveyed,

> "I feel like that a lot of teachers don't have training on it. I haven't seen any trainings that's been specific to PBIS. I want to know more so than I can do better implementing it in my classroom. But with me implementing it, I would need to know more. I mean, I definitely do want to go to training."

***Category 2*.** The second category is teacher buy-in. In addition to a lack of PD, participants also conveyed on multiple occasions that teacher buy-in negatively impacts the implementation of PBIS; six of the seven participants expressed teacher buy-in more than three times. Participant 3 expressed a lack of teacher buy-in on nine occurrences. According to Lohrmann et al., the Boardman et al. (2005) study "found that over time, staff develops chronic frustration as a result of practices continually failing because of lack of administrative support" (Lohrmann, Formanm Martin, & Palmeri, 2008, p. 257). For example, participant 3 expressed:

> "I think if this were introduced to our school, the initial thought would be something negative. I think it would be viewed as one more program, one more thing we have to do."

In contrast, participant five did not mention a lack of teacher buy-in as negatively impacting PBIS implementation. Participant 5 did not mention teacher buy-in at all during the interview.

Table 4

Significant barriers to implementing PBIS

Participants	PD	Teacher buy-in
1	5	3
2	4	3
3	3	9
4	7	1
5	8	0
6	3	2
7	5	3

Theme 3. The third theme is critical enablers for sustaining PBIS. Findings indicated that, again, PD ranked high with participants regarding sustaining PBIS in the classroom and schoolwide. Teacher buy-in had multiple instances of mention during the interviews, with six of seven participants discussing teacher buy-in as critical for sustaining PBIS.

Category 1. The first category is professional development (PD). All seven participants discussed the importance of PD for sustaining PBIS. Four participants mentioned PD four or more times during the interview. Studies have indicated a functional relationship between coaching and an increase in the teachers' accuracy of implementation of the SWPBIS procedures (Bethune, 2017) when training is provided consistently throughout the school year. Participant 7 conveyed, “I believe if we were to implement it, the training should be ongoing for teachers, making it consistent and sustainable.”

Category 2. The second category is teacher buy-in. For PBIS to be effective, teachers need to see the value in it and to understand why it is being used (Lohrmann et al. 2008; Pinkelman et al., 2015; Tyre & Feuerborn, 2017). Two participants mentioned teacher buy-in as a critical issue in sustaining PBIS on at least eight instances (see Table 5 and Appendix H). Participant 7 conveyed,

> "I feel like every classroom should have about the same type of PBIS. I can see where they have that, the charts and they can see where they're at in, you know if they've made a good choice or a bad choice. But I also think that older teachers are not always willing to change what they're doing. And if they've got a system that's been working for them, then they don't see it as a whole for the whole school to change what we're doing to make it better for everybody."

Participant 1 expressed, "I believe the entire school, from the superintendent to the grounds crew, must understand and adopt the principles of the PBIS initiative as their own in order for it to be sustained and hopefully successfully sustained."

Table 5

Critical Enablers for Sustaining PBIS

Participants	PD	Teacher buy-in
1	3	4
2	1	1
3	5	0
4	6	8
5	2	1
6	4	8
7	7	2

Theme 4. The fourth theme was a significant barrier in sustaining PBIS. Findings indicated that, again, PD ranked high with participants but also as a barrier to sustaining PBIS in the classroom and schoolwide. Teacher buy-in, again, was displayed as a secondary barrier to sustaining PBIS in the classroom and schoolwide.

Category 1. The first category was professional development (PD). All seven participants discussed the importance of a lack of PD as a barrier for sustaining PBIS. Again, four participants mentioned PD four or more times during the interview. However, this was concerning not having access to sustained and ongoing PD throughout the school year. According to research, a need is present for prolonged training with teachers in the implementation of PBIS in local school districts within Grades K-5 (Bethune, 2017; Lohrmann et al., 2008; Pinkelman et al., 2015).

Category 2. The second category was teacher buy-in. "A lot of teachers feel like PBIS is 'just another thing' they have to do that won't have a significant enough positive outcome to be worth their time" (Pinkelman et al., 2015, p. 177). Lohrmann et al. (2008) also conveyed, "The implication of staff's not believing that an initiative will receive continued support from an administrator is that they do not take the time to become knowledgeable about and ultimately adopt new practices" (p. 257).

Six of the seven participants expressed concern about teacher buy-in as a barrier. Breaking this down further, two of the seven participants expressed teacher buy-in in three or more instances as a barrier (see Table 6 and Appendix I). "Deficiency in teacher buy-in has been noted as a significant barrier because teachers who are not supportive of the intervention are unlikely to see the benefits of the intervention or practice" (Pinkelman et al. 2015, p. 173).

Participant 1 stated, “I believe it is important to analyze the data frequently to see which behavioral expectations are succeeding and which ones need help. The data also shows administrators and teachers where and when the unacceptable behaviors tend to occur.” Despite Participant 1’s personal buy-in, she has reservations regarding her peers' buy-in to PBIS framework and its ability to be sustained. She expressed

> “They either don’t believe it can work or haven’t seen it be successful, so they have the mindset that it will never work. They’ve never had a chance to see it succeed, and they’ve probably never really had training on how to use it in their classroom.”

Participant 3 voiced,

> “I'm not sure that everyone would see the big picture of the benefits. I don't think that most people would see the big picture that this should help increase our test scores. If the teachers have bought into it and the administration has bought into it, then it would be able to be sustained.”

Table 6

Significant Barrier in Sustaining PBIS

Participants	PD	Teacher buy-in
1	6	3
2	2	2
3	3	3
4	1	2
5	3	0
6	2	1
7	5	1

Sub Themes From Findings

Based on all the analyzed data, it was found that a total of three sub-themes emerged: effectiveness, time, and communication.

Sub-Theme 1. The first sub theme is effectiveness, which emerged was a resounding belief in the effectiveness of PBIS in developing students' prosocial behaviors in rural elementary schools (see Table 7 and Appendix J).

Table 7

PBIS Ineffectiveness Versus Effectiveness in Developing Prosocial Behaviors

Participants	PBIS ineffectiveness	PBIS effectiveness
1	1	2
2	5	11
3	0	10
4	0	7
5	1	14
6	6	14
7	3	4

PBIS effectiveness refers to how teachers perceive the PBIS framework as decreasing or eliminating undesired behavior and propagating desired and socially acceptable behaviors. Effectiveness, according to Steed et al. (2013) should include,

> practices associated with an organized and predictable environment including (a) following a consistent classroom schedule and structuring transitions (e.g., a verbal warning prior to transition, an auditory transition signal, visual cues for lining up), (b) preparing materials prior to starting an activity, and (c) responding consistently to challenging behavior. (p. 39)

All seven participants believed in the effectiveness of PBIS in improving student behavior and helping students develop prosocial behaviors. However, it was also

expressed that the PBIS framework only has efficacy with some students, resulting in negative selectivity with students displaying adverse behavior and socialization skills from the onset. Consensus also revealed teachers believed the PBIS framework could work more effectively with initial and sustained training. Five of the seven participants expressed on seven or more occasions, their strong belief in the effectiveness of PBIS in positively modifying student behavior. Interview questions six, eight, and 10 allowed participants to express their beliefs in the effectiveness of PBIS in improving student behavior and in the development of prosocial skills.

6. How do you see the PBIS framework in improving students' behavior and socialization in rural elementary schools?

8. How do you think school personnel perceives PBIS as a useful tool in achieving desired outcomes?

10. What are your perceptions of how PBIS develops prosocial behaviors in students?

Participant 5 related her belief in PBIS assisting students from disadvantaged families in learning coping skills; the students may not usually learn in their home environment. She expressed,

> "They learn different coping skills, like ways that they can manage their anger in a quick minute. Some of the things that they have to deal with, that they can't cope with, you know, at home it really affects them negatively. It really affects them in a normal general classroom. Um, I don't think that they would be able to function for very long in a general ed classroom if they didn't learn different coping skills to help them."

Participant 6 reiterated the feelings expressed by Participant 5 regarding students who come from disadvantaged homes. She expressed,

> "I feel like if we could use that and really change that rough patch for students on a schoolwide basis, then students are going to use the new skills, and they're going to be happier, they're going to learn more, or just be an overall improvement in their lives."

Participant 6 also expressed an example from a previous school.

> "So at the last school I was at, we had what was considered a family, and the families were broken up into different teachers. And then those teachers had students at all grade levels, kindergarten, pre-K through fifth, whatever grade it was. Once a month, we would have kind of like your club day, but it was called a family day. We would all get together and just sit and talk and socialize. That was time for a student to come to their school family, to know that they were loved, know that 'Hey, I'm having this issue in this class and I don't want to talk to that teacher, will you do it for me?' And that was really neat because once they were in that family, they stayed with that person, with that group of teachers. So that bond was really formed, which is really important in a rural area. A lot of times, they don't have that safe zone. So that school made that safe zone."

Participant 2 expressed,

> "I think it is a good program because it shapes behavior by rewarding for being good. It's good in teaching consequences and appropriate social skills. It is supposed to motivate students to make good choices and use appropriate behavior

with teachers and with peers. I see it as a priority because learning cannot take place until behaviors are under control."

Sub-Theme 2. The second sub-theme that emerged from the data analysis was time, specifically time as an obstacle to implementing and sustaining PBIS. "Time refers to the resources needed to carry out activities related to SWPBIS in terms of individuals' time for planning or implementation" (Pinkelman et al., 2015, p. 177). According to Pinkelman et al. (2015), a frequent obstacle noted was the resource of time, of needing time to implement all steps required for PBIS to be successful (including planning the steps to implementation). Three of the seven participants expressed a lack of time as a barrier to them implementing PBIS in their classroom (see Table 8 and Appendix K). Interview Questions 13 and 19 allowed participants an opportunity to express their beliefs on how PBIS implementation and sustainability could be improved.

13. How could PBIS be easier to implement?

19. What do you believe is the most significant barrier to you implementing and sustaining PBIS?

Participants 4, 5, and 6 all communicated time as a barrier in implementing and sustaining PBIS. Yet, Participant 4 was the only participant who expressed time equally as both a barrier and an enabler. Participant 4 related time should be utilized during teacher PD days, referred to as Connected Campus day, as an enabler in facilitating PBIS in the classroom. Participant 4 expressed, "I think if time is what we need, that could happen with our connected campus and things if they chose to, um, to use that time for PD."

In contrast, Participant 4 also conveyed concern over the time required to implement PBIS in her classroom. She conveyed, “I think it does take a little more time to talk about it more, give them more opportunities to meet their behavior goals. Um, and time is always tight for us right now.”

Participant 5 mentioned on four occasions time as a barrier in implementing and sustaining PBIS in her classroom. She conveyed,

> “I guess the only limitation really would be time. I know the special education teacher would probably like to be able to have more time with them (students), but with scheduling and there's only one special education teacher, well, you can only have so much time with each student or teacher. I guess time would be the only thing. It would be better if we had more time during the day. Not having enough time to meet with the special education teacher every week and not having time during planning to plan something PBIS related. We're both doing our own planning, so it makes it hard to meet.”

Table 8

Time for PBIS Implementation

Participants	Time as barrier	Time as an enabler
1	0	0
2	0	0
3	0	0
4	2	3
5	4	0
6	1	0
7	0	0

Sub-Theme 3. Communication emerged as a sub-theme, specifically communication in the implementation and sustainability in PBIS between fellow teachers and administration (to include Central Office personnel). In the Lohrmann et al. (2008) study, communication was "perceived as an important connection to facilitators, because when school staff did not understand how implementing the universal intervention could help them to meet their academic goals, they were reluctant to invest their time, energy, and resources" (p. 263).

Six of seven participants expressed a lack of communication between coworkers and administration as a barrier to them implementing PBIS in their classroom (see Table 9 and Appendix L). However, Participant 6 stated a strong belief in a lack of communication between peers and administration as a negative in permitting the facilitation of PBIS in her classroom and schoolwide, expressing her negative perceptions of her experiences on six different occasions. Interview Questions 8, 12, 14, 19, and 20 allowed participants a chance to convey their beliefs on how PBIS implementation and sustainability could be improved.

8. How do you think school personnel perceives PBIS as a useful tool in achieving desired outcomes?

12. Can you think of examples you feel would help improve the implementation and sustainability of PBIS?

14. How do you feel about the school in general as being knowledgeable in implementing and sustaining PBIS?

19. What do you believe is the most significant barrier to you implementing and sustaining PBIS?

20. What you believe are the most significant enablers and barriers schoolwide?

Participant 6 expressed,

> "I don't hear talk of it very often. I don't see the teachers collaborating on a consistent base school-wide, and overall, it has been this case. I would just say the lack of consistency, not being able to collaborate, not seeing that in itself is a barrier."

Participant 5 expressed her perception on four different occasions, stating:

> "If, you know, we had more time to always be on the same page, you know, communicate every week with what we're doing and how I can help the special education teacher and how she can help me and how we could be on the same page. I guess that would be helpful. I guess us communicating so we can be on the same page and knowing what kinds of things that the special education teacher is teaching them so that I can be on that same page with her and visa verso. So, I guess just the communication so we can be on the same page and being open yeah, just, yeah, keeping communication open and ongoing. I think that's pretty significant. That'll be the best thing."

Participant 7 ranked communication equally as good at facilitating in the implementation and sustainability, yet, equally as prohibiting the implantation and sustainability of PBIS in the classroom and schoolwide.

> "I believe there is an issue with consistency with what we do. Well, sometimes they need reminders that, yeah, that's not the way that things are. I think it would be beneficial, but we would all have to be doing the same things that we've reflected on from training and going through, but that requires ongoing

> continuous communication between teachers and administration. Yeah, administration in the school and from CO (Central Office). I've spent most of my career in secondary, so you don't hear about that as much about PBIS on the secondary level as you do in the elementary level. I don't believe they (the teachers) probably know a lot about it (PBIS). I've never heard them (the teachers) talk about it or what they do. So, I don't really know how they would perceive that (implementing it consistently). I don't know-how up to date a lot of our teachers are on new educational programs, especially concerning behaviors."

Participant 1 conveyed on two occasions,

> "I don't know how up to date a lot of our teachers are on the educational, um hat would you call them? Um, behavior programs, or things that we would do to help improve their behavior. It would be great if we occasionally talked about the behavior of a student, bouncing ideas off of each other to see what works and what doesn't."

Table 9

Communication as a Facilitator in Implementing and Sustaining PBIS

Participants	Enabler communication	Barrier communication
1	2	0
2	0	0
3	1	0
4	1	1
5	4	2
6	0	6
7	3	3

Summary

A case study approach was used for this qualitative study. The collection of data was conducted through participant interviews, observations, and researcher journaling. This chapter sought to analyze data results that explore rural elementary school teachers' perceptions of their ability to implement and sustain PBIS in the classroom as well as on a schoolwide basis. Participants of the study included seven rural elementary teachers, Grades 1-5. Each in-depth interview was recorded and then transcribed. Each transcription was further analyzed by the researcher. The analysis of data presented a story, with experiences felt and believed.

The first major category that emerged from the analysis of the themes was that teachers perceive PD equally as assisting in facilitating PBIS as well as a barrier to PBIS, particularly when there is a lack of initial and sustained PD. A second major category to emerge from the theme analysis was also equally expressed, teacher-buy in. Teachers expressed the importance for all teachers and administration to buy-in to the implementation and to sustaining PBIS for it to be effective. However, teachers also represented that a lack of teacher and administration buy-in is a detriment in the facilitation and sustaining of PBIS.

Finally, three sub-themes also emerged from the analysis. First, there was a consensus that PBIS could be very effective in reducing undesired behavior and promulgating desired behavior. Secondly, participants each expressed that PBIS would be more effective if they had more time to plan and implement strategies. Finally, communication ranked high among participants. They expressed an overall feeling of a lack of communication between peers (collaboration) and all levels of administration and

felt that more communication would assist in implementing and sustaining PBIS both in their classroom and schoolwide.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

In this section, the researcher addresses the meanings and understandings of the perception teachers expressed in the enablers and barriers to the implementation and sustainability of PBIS in the classroom and schoolwide. The chapter begins with a synopsis of the problem, as part of an overview of the study. Next, the researcher discusses the implications drawn from each theme. Study limitations follow implications. Next, the researcher proposes recommendations to teachers and all levels of administrators. Finally, the researcher recommends prospective future investigations that are derived from the findings and limitations of the study.

Overview of the Study

Schools today are required to implement some form of PBIS school-wide and in the classroom. This requirement is due to the overwhelming, disruptive behaviors of students that are disrupting academic learning. These disruptive behaviors are increasing at an exponential rate (Burke et al., 2011; Dalgiç & Bayhan, 2014; Shun & Shek, 2012). Disruptive behaviors range from minor infractions such as talking in class and tardiness to more serious infractions such as violence against another student or teacher and vandalism (Shun & Shek, 2012). To help mitigate disruptive behaviors, the federal government embedded regulations for school systems to follow and make use of PBIS procedures both schoolwide as well as in individual classrooms (About IDEA, 2018). Incorporated within these mandates are requirements and funding for teacher professional development (interim alternative educational settings, behavioral support, systemic school interventions, personnel development to improve services and results for children

with disabilities, use of funds). Rural schools are burned with an excessive amount of academic learning issues, which negatively affect a student's ability to learn. These include poverty, hunger, violence in the home and or neighborhood, substance abuse (either themselves or a parent), and homelessness, just to name a few. Implementation of a PBIS framework was mandated by Congress to assist in the alleviation of these issues in the homes of improving academics and socialization skills.

Teachers are at the forefront of implementing and sustaining PBIS in the classroom. As such, it is essential to allow for the articulation of their perceptions regarding what they feel enables or proves as a barrier for their implementation and sustainability of PBIS. As the frontline of implementation, it is vital teachers feel free to express their perceptions on PBIS.

The central question for this qualitative case study was understanding teacher perception in implementing and sustaining PBIS strategies within the classroom and schoolwide. To assist the researcher in gaining teacher perceptions, the researcher developed four questions.

Research Question 1. What do teachers perceive as the most critical enablers for implementing PBIS?

Research Question 2. What do teachers perceive as the most significant barrier to implementing PBIS?

Research Question 3. What do teachers perceive as the most critical enablers for sustaining PBIS?

Research Question 4. What do teachers perceive as the most significant barrier in sustaining PBIS?

An invitation to participate was extended to 13 rural elementary teachers; seven agreed to be interviewed for the study. Each participant was interviewed on an agreed-upon date and time. The time for each interview was during her planning period. Interviewing during their planning period afforded an opportunity for limited to no distractions, allowing each participant to concentrate on each question fully. Offering opportunities for maximum concentration provided for full and rich descriptions on the implementation and sustainability of PBIS in the classroom and schoolwide. Each interview lasted between 40 to 45 minutes over a five-week timespan. Upon completion of the interviews, the researcher transcribed the interviews and analyzed the results and searched for categories and themes related to the main research question and the four sub-questions.

Summary of Findings

Four themes emerged from the data analysis, (a) critical enablers for implementing PBIS, (b) significant barriers to implementing PBIS, (c) critical enablers for sustaining PBIS, and (d) significant barrier in sustaining PBIS. Three sub-themes emerged from the data analysis, (a) PBIS effectiveness, (b) time, and (c) communication. The four themes that emerged from the analysis had two persistent categories, *(*a) professional development (PD), and (b) teacher buy-in. Teachers perceive PD equally as assisting in facilitating PBIS as well as a barrier to PBIS, particularly when there is a lack of initial and sustained PD. A second category to emerge from the analysis was also equally expressed, teacher-buy in. Teachers expressed the importance for all teachers and administration to buy-in to the implementation and to sustaining PBIS for it to be effective. However, teachers also represented that a lack of teacher and administration

buy-in is a detriment in the facilitation and sustaining of PBIS.

Finally, three sub-themes also emerged from the analysis. First, there was a consensus that PBIS was or could be very effective in reducing undesired behavior while also promulgating desired behavior. Secondly, participants each expressed that PBIS would be more effective if they had more time to plan and implement strategies. Finally, communication ranked high among participants. They expressed an overall feeling of a lack of communication between peers (collaboration) and all levels of administration and felt that more communication would assist in implementing and sustaining PBIS both in their classroom and schoolwide.

Interpretation of the Results

Four themes emerged from the data analysis, (a) critical enablers for implementing PBIS, (b) significant barriers to implementing PBIS, (c) critical enablers for sustaining PBIS, and (d) significant barrier in sustaining PBIS. Each was discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

The four themes that emerged from the analysis had two persistent categories, (a) professional development (PD) and (b) teacher buy-in. Professional development (PD) was expressed more frequently by all participants as significant in facilitating the implementation of PBIS. Of the seven participants, 86% mentioned PD on four or more instances. This perception is supported from previous studies which indicated that a lack of knowledge and understanding on how to practice the PBIS framework are two issues hindering a successful implementation, leaving many teachers perplexed to the terminology, why the implementation is needed, and the steps associated with the

implementation of it (Bethune, 2017; Lohrmann et al. 2008; Pinkelman et al. 2015; Tyre, & Feuerborn, 2017).

All participants, to a varying degree, expressed sentiments on both categories to a varying degree and were also barriers to the implementation of the PBIS framework. Again, PD was voiced more often than the other category, showing all 100% of participants stating their perception as a barrier to implementing PBIS in their classroom or schoolwide, conveying their perceptions an average of five times per interview. According to Lohrmann et al., the Boardman et al. (2005) study "found that over time, staff develops chronic frustration as a result of practices continually failing because of lack of administrative support" (Lohrmann, Formanm Martin, & Palmeri, 2008, p. 257). Teacher buy-in was discussed an average of 3.5 times by six of the participants during the interviews. For PBIS to be effective, teachers need to see its value and understand why it is being used (Lohrmann et al. 2008; Pinkelman et al., 2015; Tyre & Feuerborn, 2017). "Deficiency in teacher buy-in has been noted as a significant barrier because teachers who are not supportive of the intervention are unlikely to see the benefits of the intervention or practice" (Pinkelman et al. 2015, p. 173).

The participants also expressed their perceptions that both categories assisted them in sustaining the PBIS framework. Beginning with the PD theme, 100% of participants discussed PD as an enabler to sustaining PBIS schoolwide and within their classroom. PD was discussed an average of four times during each interview. According to research, a need is present for prolonged training with teachers in the sustainability of PBIS in local school districts within grades K-5 (Bethune, 2017; Lohrmann et al., 2008; Pinkelman et al., 2015). Teacher buy-in was also mentioned in facilitating the

sustainability of PBIS schoolwide or in the classroom. For PBIS to be effective and sustainable, administrators and teachers need much more than four hours of professional training (Lohrmann et al., 2008; Pinkelman et al., 2015; Tyre & Feuerborn, 2017).

The first sub-theme to emerge from the data was the effectiveness of the PBIS framework. There was a universal consensus that the PBIS framework is effective, with 100% of participants expressing its effectiveness in improving student behavior and reducing undesired behavior. “The PBIS framework must be effective because it will reinforce prosocial behavior in students, which can also increase academic success,” mentioned one of the participants.

The second sub-theme that emerged from the data was time, specifically a lack of time to implement or sustain PBIS both in the classroom and on a schoolwide basis. Three out of seven participants conveyed they felt they did not have enough time to plan how to implement, let alone sustain, PBIS. Teachers must have adequate time for any program but especially when initiating a new program such as the PBIS framework. Failure to have adequate preparation time will see failure and frustration develop with teachers and students.

The final sub-theme was communication. The majority of participants conveyed that communication is a factor in facilitating the PBIS framework schoolwide and within their classroom. By contrast, four out of seven, indicated a lack of communication as a hindrance to facilitating and sustaining the PBIS framework. Communication is important in any endeavor. A failure to communicate results in misunderstandings and can ultimately result in a failure in the PBIS format.

Implications of Findings

The findings from this research indicated that the PBIS framework is viewed as a beneficial strategy for improving student behavior and teaching prosocial skills. Despite this overall feeling of the PBIS framework as being beneficial, concerns were expressed for the need for initial and sustained teacher training (ongoing professional development) in the framework utilization. As one participant expressed, it would be beneficial to have a professional mentor meet with teachers and administration, to check in on the progress of using it and to answer any questions.

A secondary finding indicated that consistent communication between staff and administration would be beneficial in the initial implementation of the PBIS framework as well as ongoing to assist in its facilitation. A third consideration from the findings indicated a need for time to plan and collaborate with peers, administrators, and potential professional mentors. Finally, although not listed as a theme or sub-theme, it was mentioned that there should be consistency in the implementation. It should be implemented first, and noticeably, schoolwide, then flow down into each classroom, with each classroom displaying and mimicking the same behavioral examples and expectations.

Limitations of the Study

According to Glesne (2010), limitations in studies are comprised of "documents, people, or places" that are absent to the researcher (p. 212). Purposeful sampling was conducted for this study. Purposeful sampling encompasses the identification and selection of a population of individuals that are knowledgeable about the phenomenon of interest, allowing them to best inform the researcher of their experience (Creswell &

Poth, 2018; Palinkas et al., 2015). The first limitation of this study was that all participants were Caucasian females due to a lack of diversity. Creswell (2015) describes homogeneous sampling as being “individuals or sites based on membership in a subgroup that has defining characteristics” (p. 207). This limitation was due to the lack of diversity at the rural study locale.

A second limitation of the study revolves around the transferability of the results in other regions of the United States. This study was conducted in a small rural community in a southern state. Findings may not be representative of findings in other communities within the United States, specifically other rural communities in the north, east, or west or representative of larger populations. The economic and racial/ethnic characteristics of this geographic region may not be representative of other elementary schools in other rural areas in the nation (Steed et al., 2013).

Finally, a third limitation focuses on the sample size. This study shadowed Creswell’s (2018) recommendation for selecting more than four or five cases in a single study. Creswell (2018) noted, “this number should provide ample opportunity to identify themes of the cases as well as conduct cross-case theme analysis” (p. 160). Creswell (2015) also further expressed, “Because of the need to report details about each individual or site, the larger number of cases can become unwieldy and result in superficial perspectives” (p. 208). Yet, due to the small sample size, issues, and concerns of data, saturation of the phenomenon may be raised (Gentles, Charles, Ploeg, & McKibbon, 2015). Yet, there are means to mitigate this limitation. For example, Creswell states using "a rich think description to convey findings” (p. 202). As reflected by Creswell (2014), “When qualitative researchers provide detailed descriptions of the

setting . . . or offer many perspectives about a theme, the results become more realistic and richer. This procedure can add to the validity of the findings" (p. 202).

Recommendations for Future Research

This study's results have provided invaluable information for future studies, particularly when broken into each sub-question and theme. For example, the dominant category for the themes implementing and sustaining the PBIS framework was professional development/training on the framework. Future research should be conducted to determine the effectiveness of a professional mentorship program to improve the implementation and sustainability of the PBIS framework. Utilizing a professional mentor will allow for ongoing program evaluation that will provide insight into how stakeholders (teachers, staff, and administration) perceive the program, while also allowing for any program modifications which may arise. If proven effective, then this model could be expanded to other schools in the district, if not the entire district. Future research could also be expanded to larger school districts in the local area with similar socioeconomic and demographic levels.

Secondly, teacher buy-in was conveyed as both helping to facilitate as well as preventing effective PBIS implementation and sustainability. Future research should be conducted on effective activities that will promulgate teacher buy-in. These activities can include visiting a school that is already successfully implementing the PBIS framework, having a professional mentor or a staff member who is an expert in PBIS framework available to "bounce ideas off of," recognition/praise of teachers who are making efforts and are effectively implementing the PBIS framework, and having a consistent plan in place that if followed schoolwide will flow into the individual classrooms.

Conclusion

Students living in rural communities face more significant challenges than their urban counterparts. They have a higher rate of poverty in comparison to urban communities, have a higher rate of disabilities than those in urban areas (Thiede et al., 2017), and see higher rates of homelessness and substance abuse. Having students residing in these situations will also see the intermingling of rural challenges, thereby perpetuating the severity of the other, poverty, homelessness, which will ultimately result in adverse student behavior. Adverse behaviors include prevalent substance abuse, bullying, defiance of authority figures (such as teachers, school staff, and persons in administrative roles). Adverse behavior has been displayed for decades in American schools. However, disruptive behaviors in the classroom are increasing at an exponential rate (Burke et al., 2011; Dalgiç & Bayhan, 2014; Shun & Shek, 2012). As such, this has led to people and policymakers to search for new solutions to prevent these problem behaviors in schools. PBIS is one of the frameworks suggested to mitigate adverse behaviors.

PBIS seeks to "prevent problems by defining and teaching consistent behavioral expectations across the school while also recognizing students for expected and appropriate behaviors" (Lohrmann et al., 2008, p. 256). The PBIS framework is utilized in schools throughout the nation and has met a resounding approval from districts as an effective format to mitigate undesired behavior while promoting appropriate behaviors. Nevertheless, despite resounding approval, there have been concerns voiced by those in the forefront of utilization. As evidence from this study, the predominant perception expressed was an overwhelming need for initial and sustained training on how to

implement as well as the sustained implementation of the PBIS framework. In previous studies, this was expressed (Bethune, 2017; Lohrmann et al., 2008; Pinkelman et al., 2015). Next, in supporting the PBIS framework should be communication between peers and administration regarding methods and techniques that work compared to those that are not effective. Staff should be allowed time for collaboration with peers and administration to implement them both in the individual classroom and schoolwide.

The findings from this qualitative case study can be used to change the current approach to the PBIS framework currently implemented within the study school in addition to the study school's entire system. It was important to understand the basic perceptions of rural teachers regarding whether the PBIS framework effectively improves student behaviors and socialization skills. This study's findings can build an individualized PBIS framework, a framework tailored to meet individual school needs.

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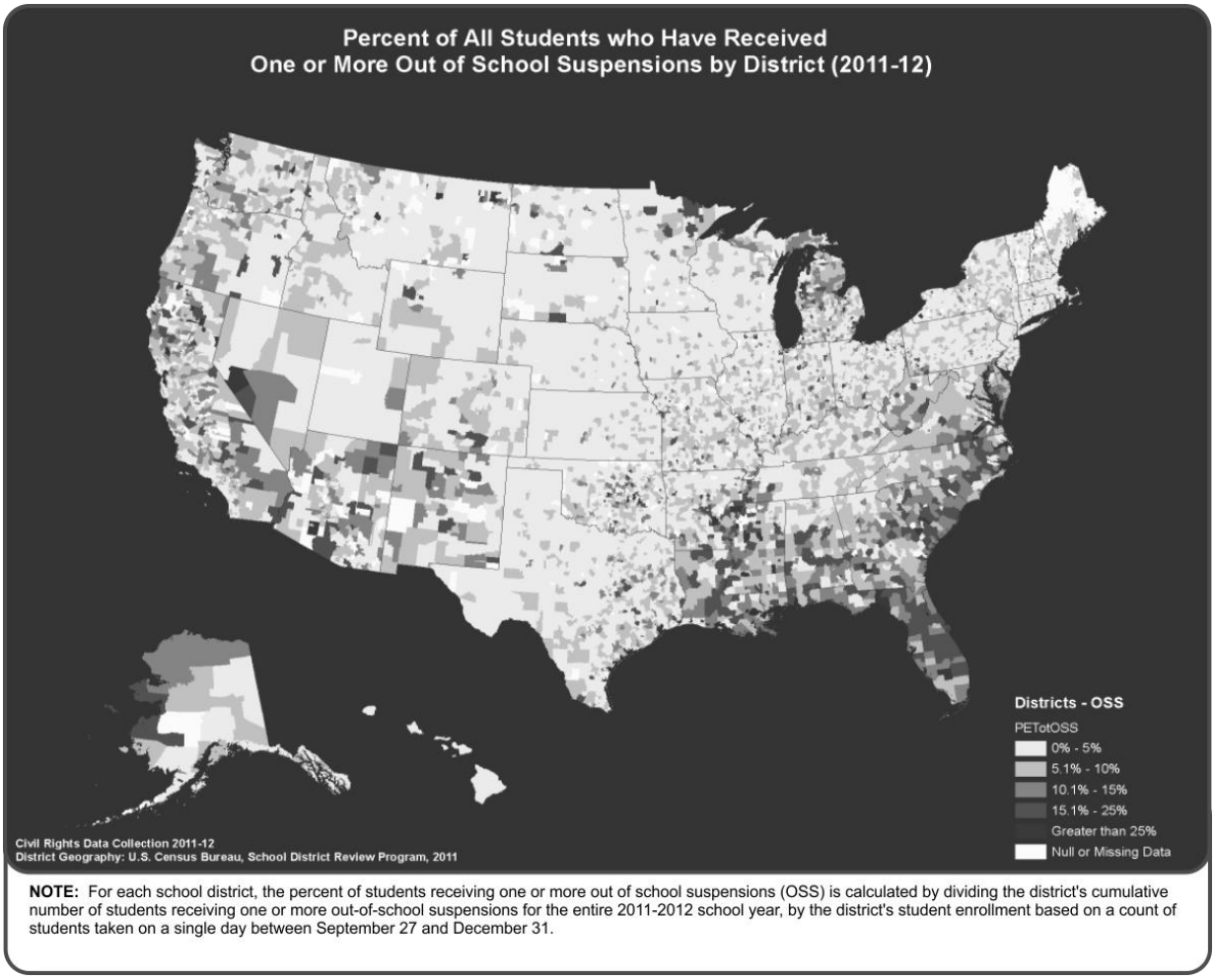
Appendix A

National Behavior Statistic



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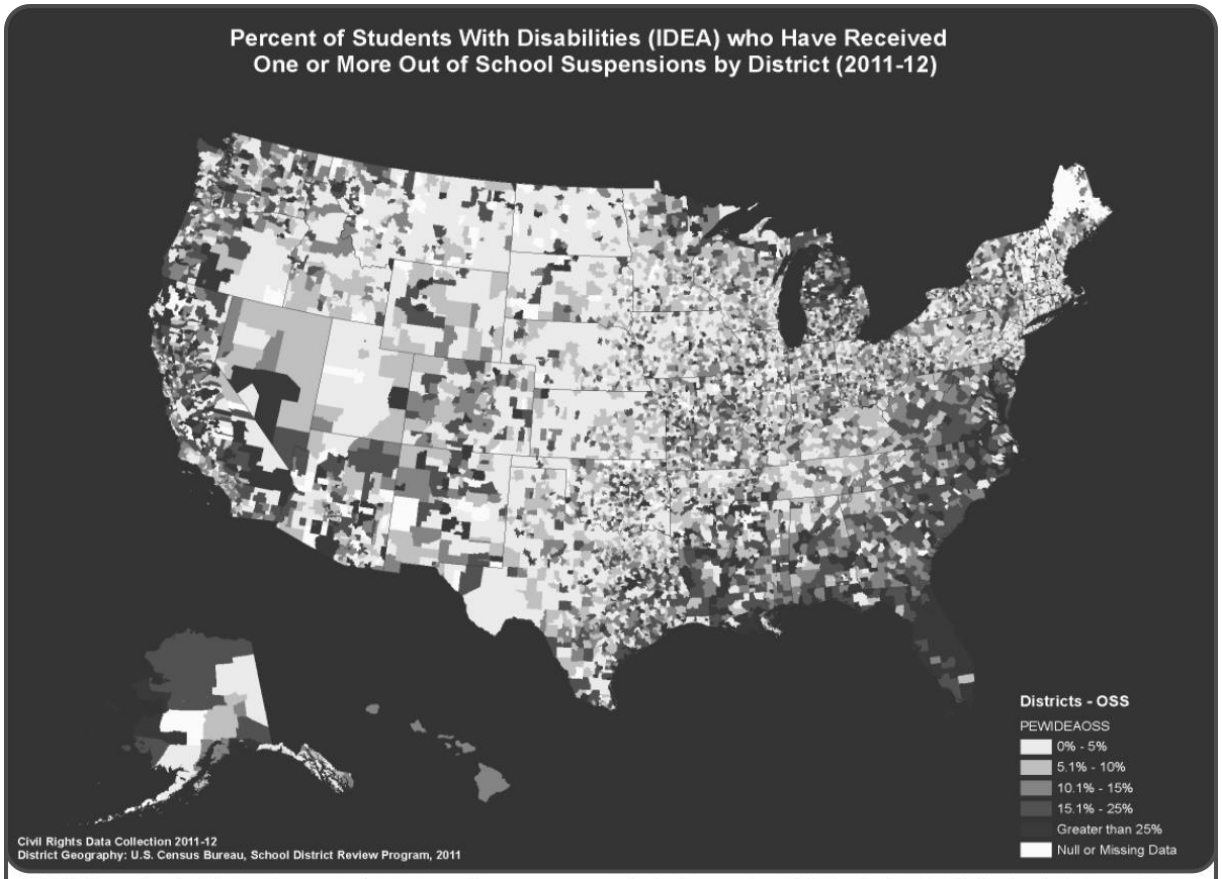

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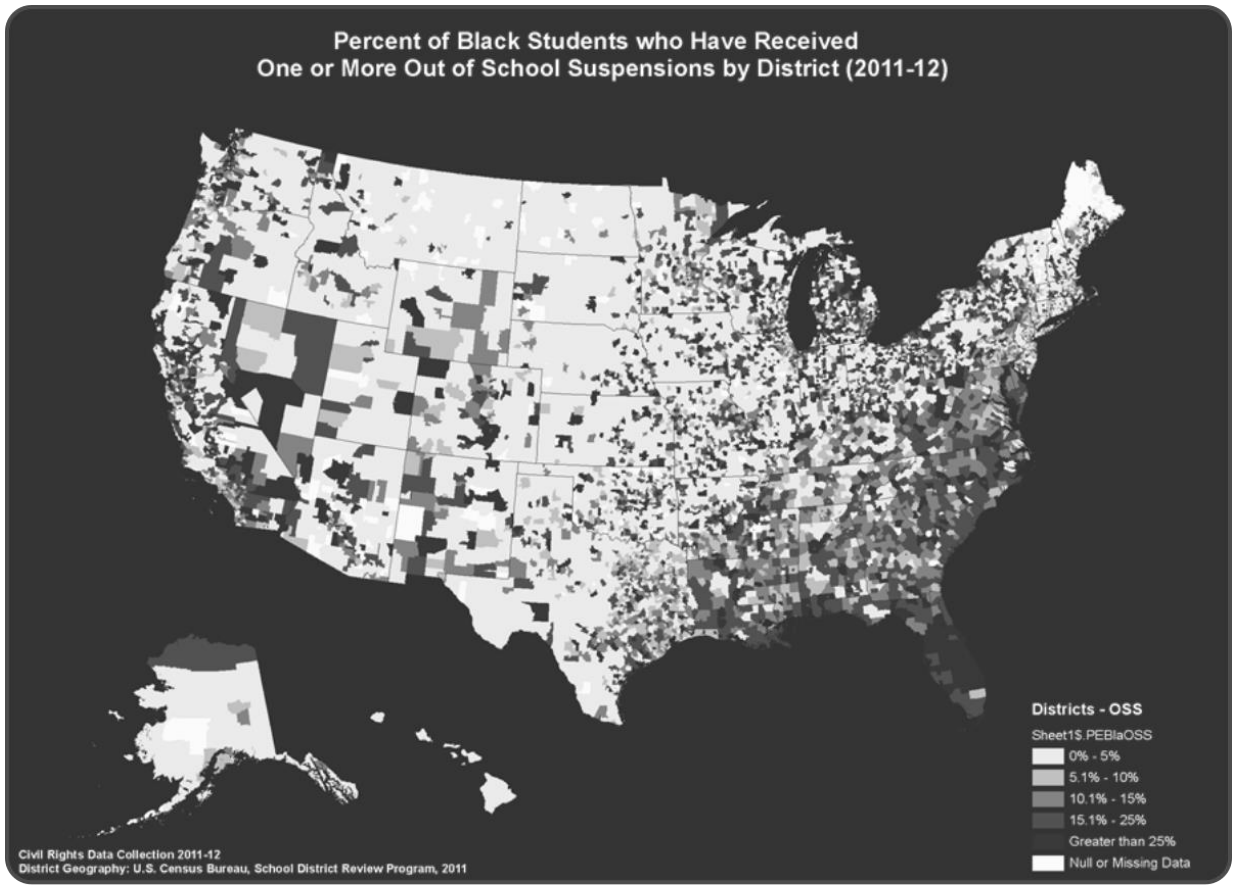
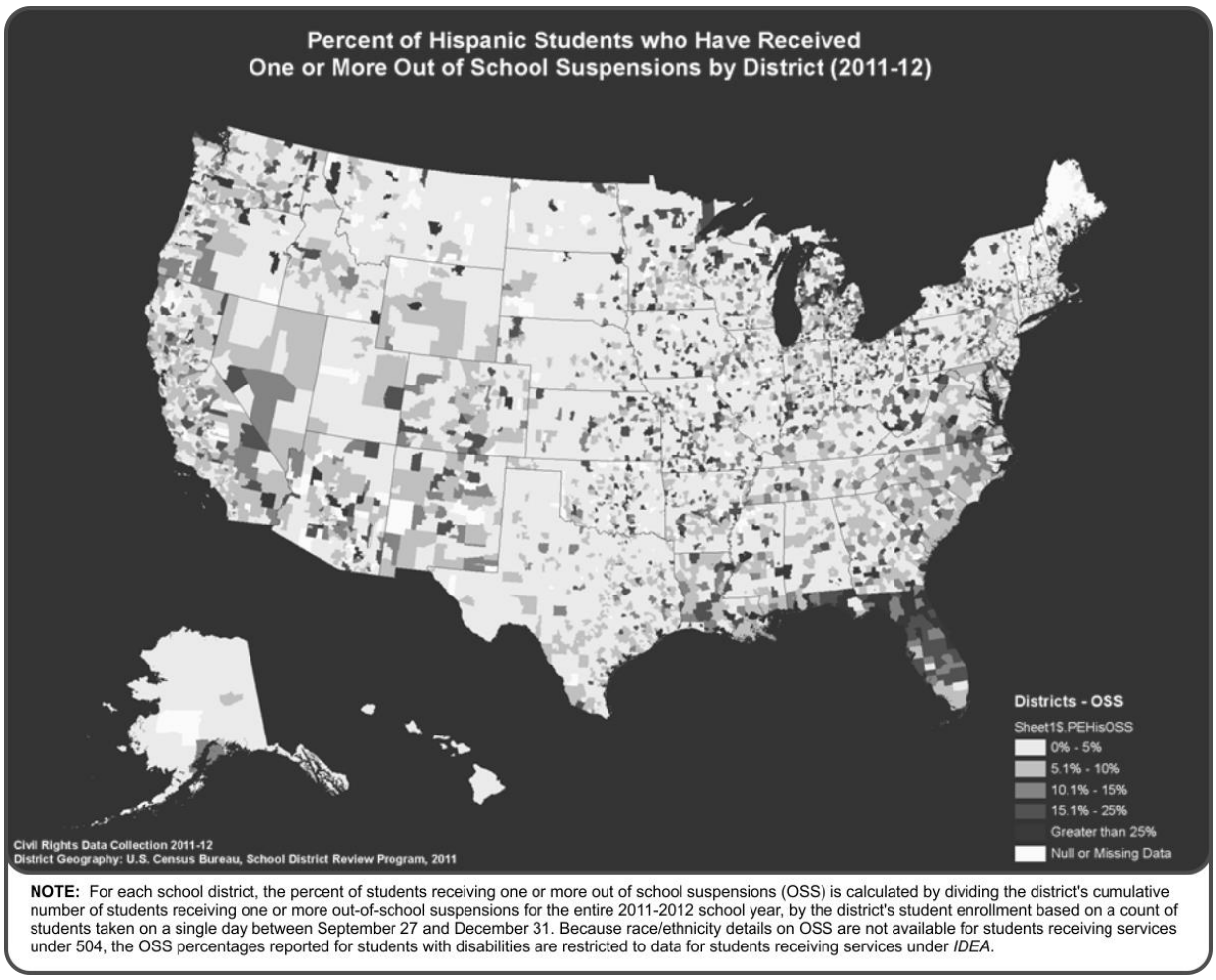


NOTE: For each school district, the percent of students receiving one or more out of school suspensions (OSS) is calculated by dividing the district's cumulative number of students receiving one or more out-of-school suspensions for the entire 2011-2012 school year, by the district's student enrollment based on a count of students taken on a single day between September 27 and December 31. Because race/ethnicity details on OSS are not available for students receiving services under 504, the OSS percentages reported for students with disabilities are restricted to data for students receiving services under IDEA.

https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/schooldiscipline/images/bstdmissing.png



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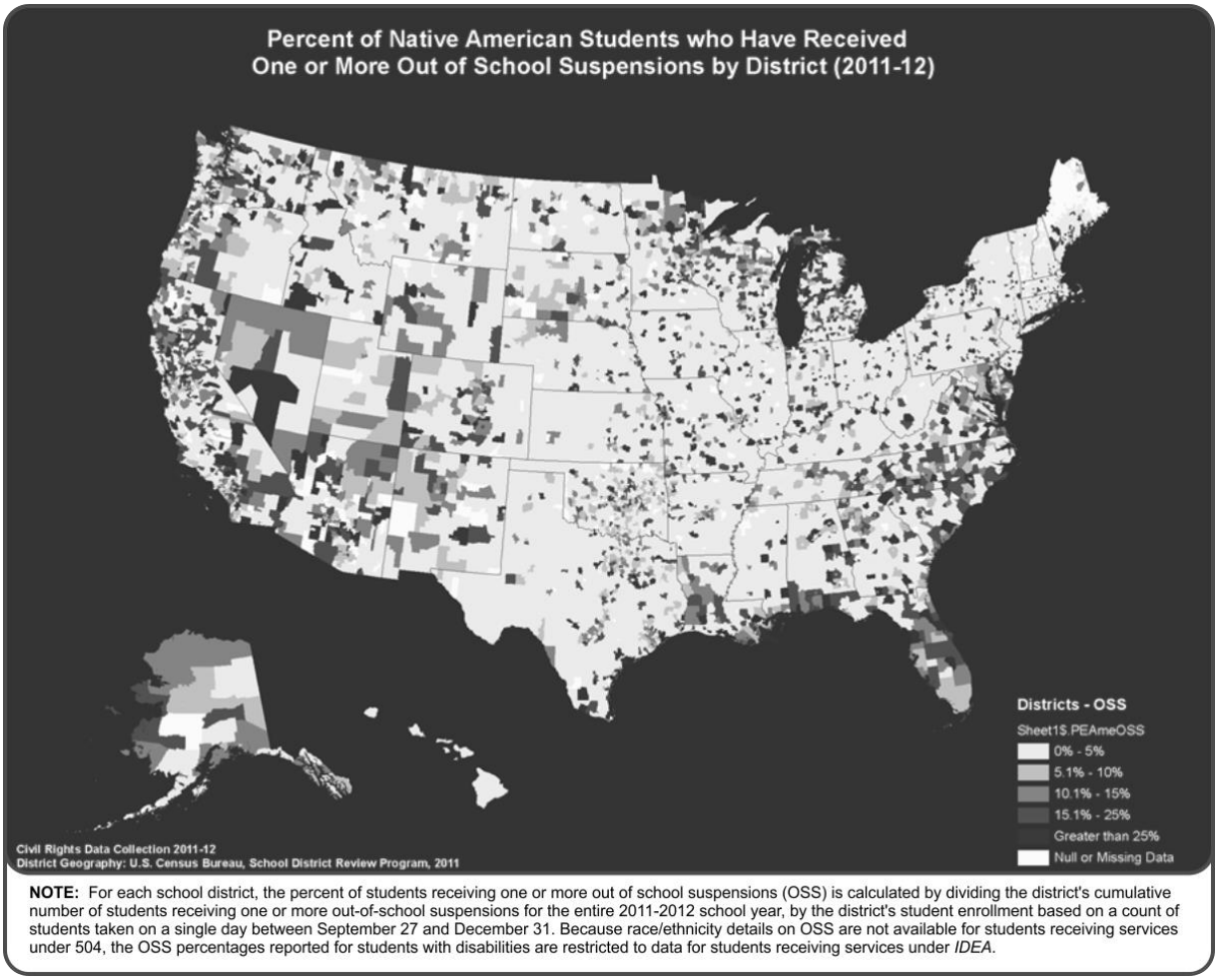
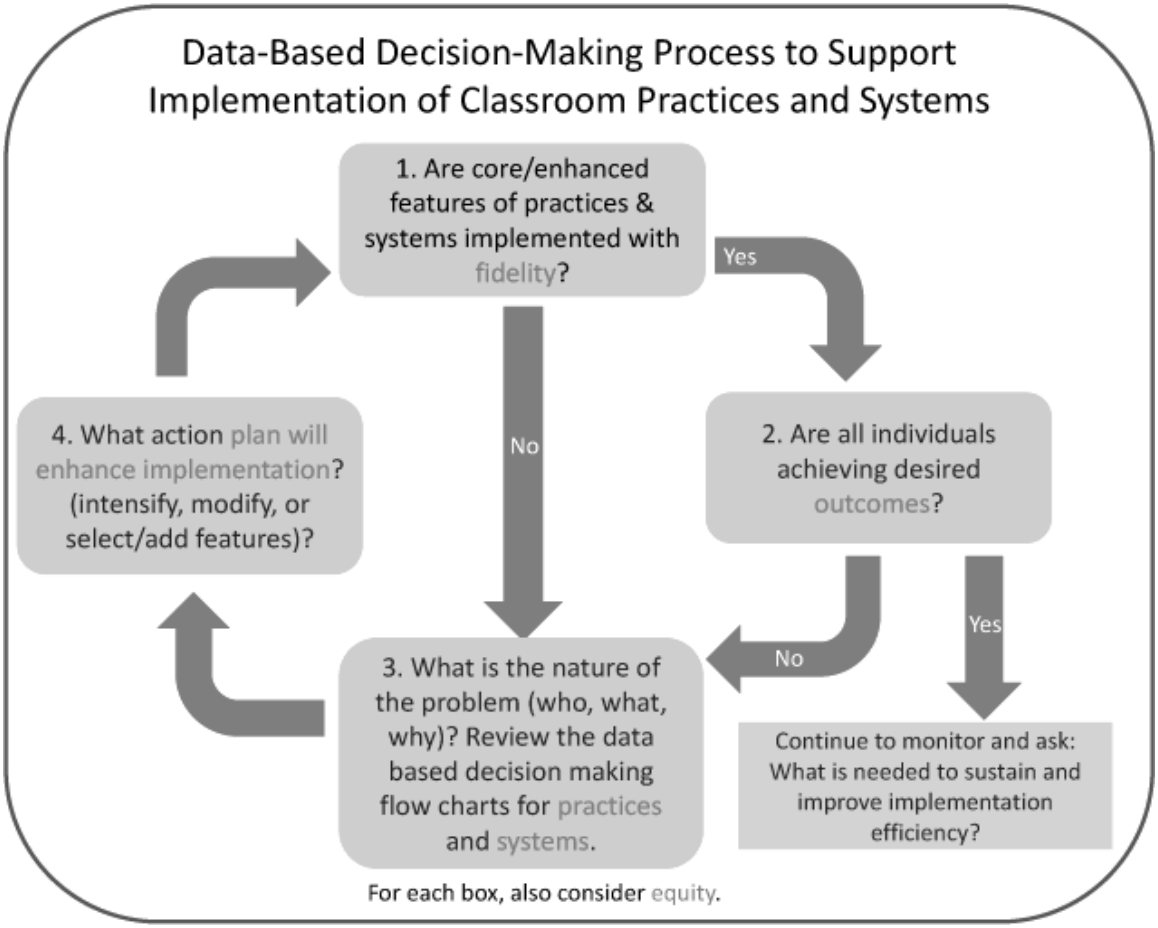


https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/schooldiscipline/images/nastdmissing.png

Appendix B

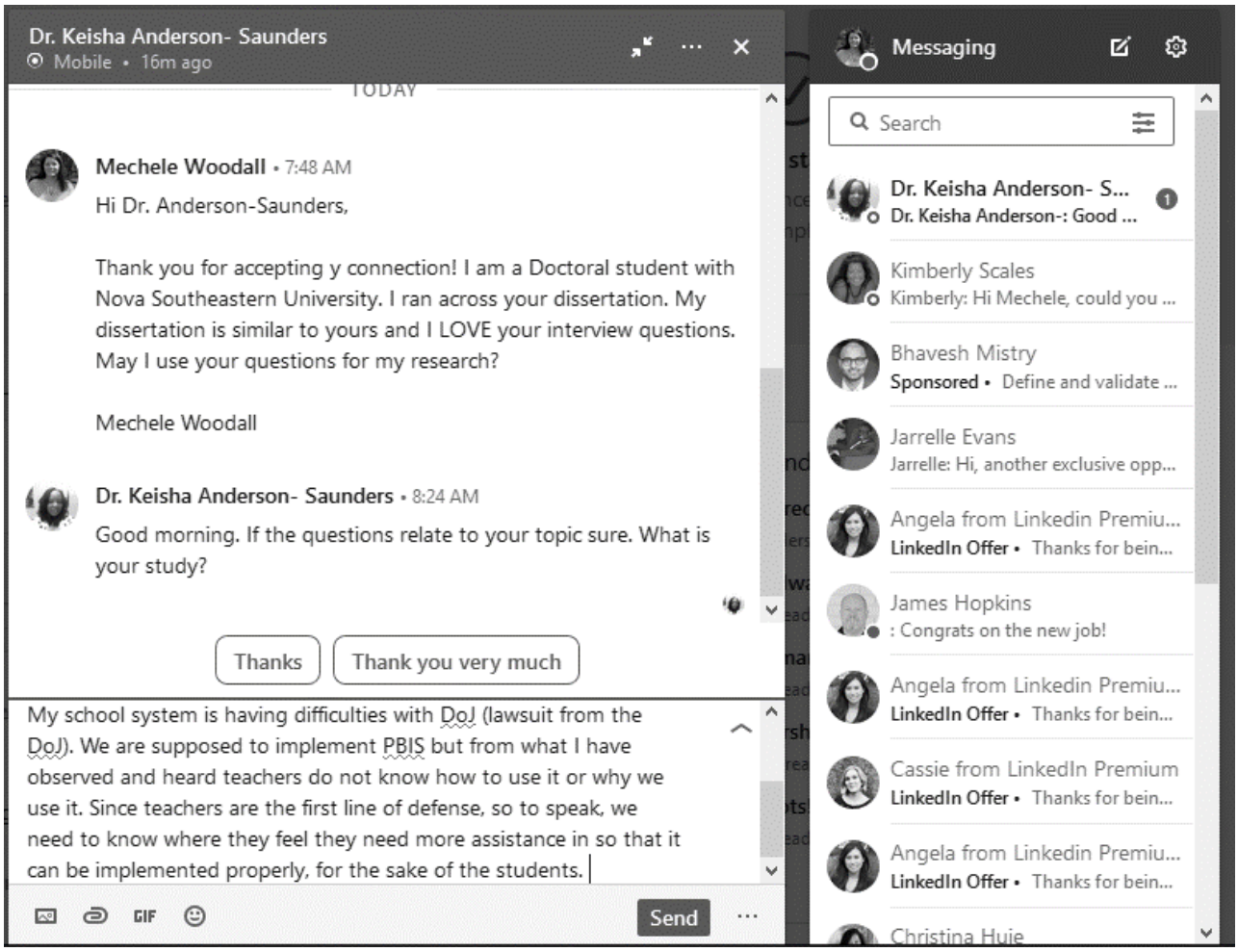
Data Decision-Making Process



https://www.pbis.org/school/pbis-in-the-classroom/classroom-pbis-data

Appendix C

Approval to Use Interview Questions


Dr. Keisha Anderson- Saunders
Mobile • 16m ago
TODAY
Mechele Woodall • 7:48 AM
Hi Dr. Anderson-Saunders,
Thank you for accepting y connection! I am a Doctoral student with Nova Southeastern University. I ran across your dissertation. My dissertation is similar to yours and I LOVE your interview questions. May I use your questions for my research?
Mechele Woodall
Dr. Keisha Anderson- Saunders • 8:24 AM
Good morning. If the questions relate to your topic sure. What is your study?
Thanks
Thank you very much
My school system is having difficulties with DoJ (lawsuit from the DoJ). We are supposed to implement PBIS but from what I have observed and heard teachers do not know how to use it or why we use it. Since teachers are the first line of defense, so to speak, we need to know where they feel they need more assistance in so that it can be implemented properly, for the sake of the students.
GIF
Send
Messaging
Search
Dr. Keisha Anderson- S...
Dr. Keisha Anderson-: Good ...
Kimberly Scales
Kimberly: Hi Mechele, could you ...
Bhavesh Mistry
Sponsored • Define and validate ...
Jarrelle Evans
Jarrelle: Hi, another exclusive opp...
Angela from Linkedin Premiu...
LinkedIn Offer • Thanks for bein...
James Hopkins
: Congrats on the new job!
Angela from Linkedin Premiu...
LinkedIn Offer • Thanks for bein...
Cassie from LinkedIn Premium
LinkedIn Offer • Thanks for bein...
Angela from Linkedin Premiu...
LinkedIn Offer • Thanks for bein...
Christina Huie

Appendix D

Interview Protocol Questions

Interview Questions

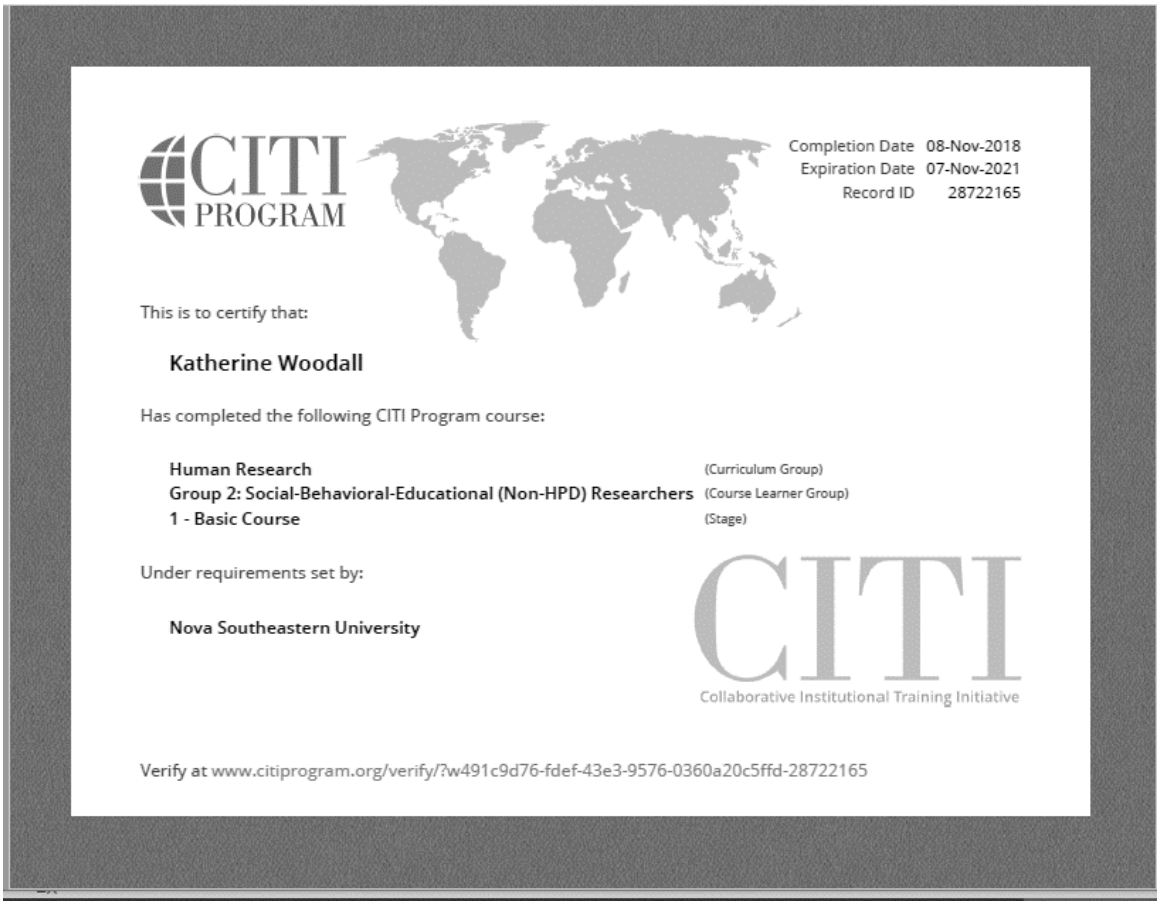
1. Tell me a little bit about yourself. (This will gauge their ability to communicate effectively and will cue me in on their preparedness for the interview.)
2. How long have you been teaching?
    a. How long at this school?
    b. Have you taught at any other schools?
        i. How many years?
3. What is your education level?
4. How familiar are you with Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS)?
5. What are your perceptions of the implementation of PBIS in the school and your class?
6. How do you see the PBIS framework in improving students' behavior and socialization in rural elementary schools?
7. How are you implementing it in your classroom? How would you use the PBIS framework to decrease undesirable behavior?
8. How do you think school personnel perceives PBIS as a useful tool in achieving desired outcomes?
9. Can you tell me how you feel PBIS training prepared you to implement PBIS in the school?
10. What are your perceptions of how PBIS develops prosocial behaviors in students?
11. Can you give me examples of what you feel are limitations of the PBIS framework?
12. Can you think of examples you feel would help improve the implementation and sustainability of PBIS?
13. How could PBIS be easier to implement?
14. How do you feel about the school in general as being knowledgeable in implementing and sustaining PBIS?
15. What are your thoughts on PBIS being critical and needed for schools and changing behaviors?
16. What are your perceptions of the adequacy of district resources that are allocated for PBIS?
17. How do you view district administration actively supporting PBIS?
18. What do you see as the most significant thing that allows you to implement and sustain PBIS in your classroom?
19. What do you believe is the most significant barrier to you implementing and sustaining PBIS?
20. What you believe are the most significant enablers and barriers school-wide?

Interview probes that will be used during interviews:

1. Please give me an example.
2. Please tell me more about…

Appendix E

CITI Certificate of Completion



CITI PROGRAM

Completion Date 08-Nov-2018
Expiration Date 07-Nov-2021
Record ID 28722165

This is to certify that:

Katherine Woodall

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Human Research (Curriculum Group)
Group 2: Social-Behavioral-Educational (Non-HPD) Researchers (Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course (Stage)

Under requirements set by:

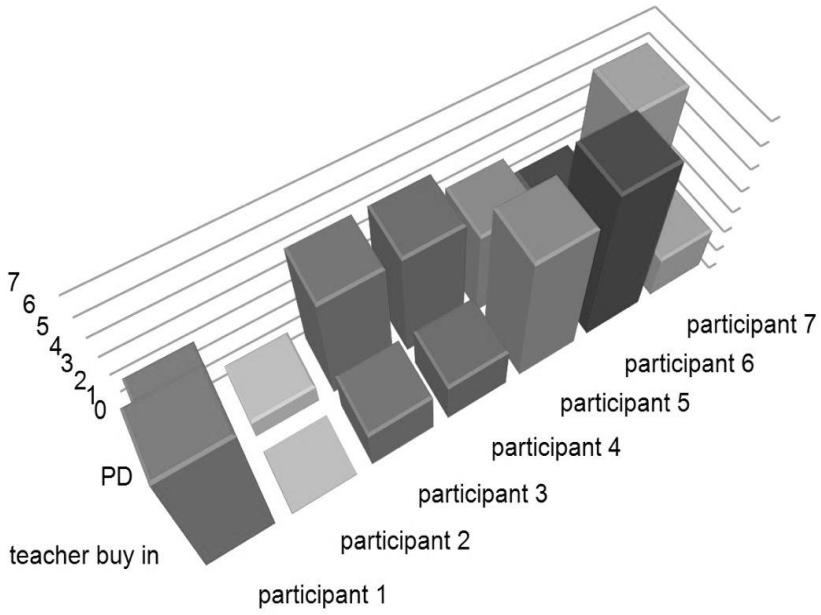
Nova Southeastern University

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w491c9d76-fdef-43e3-9576-0360a20c5ffd-28722165

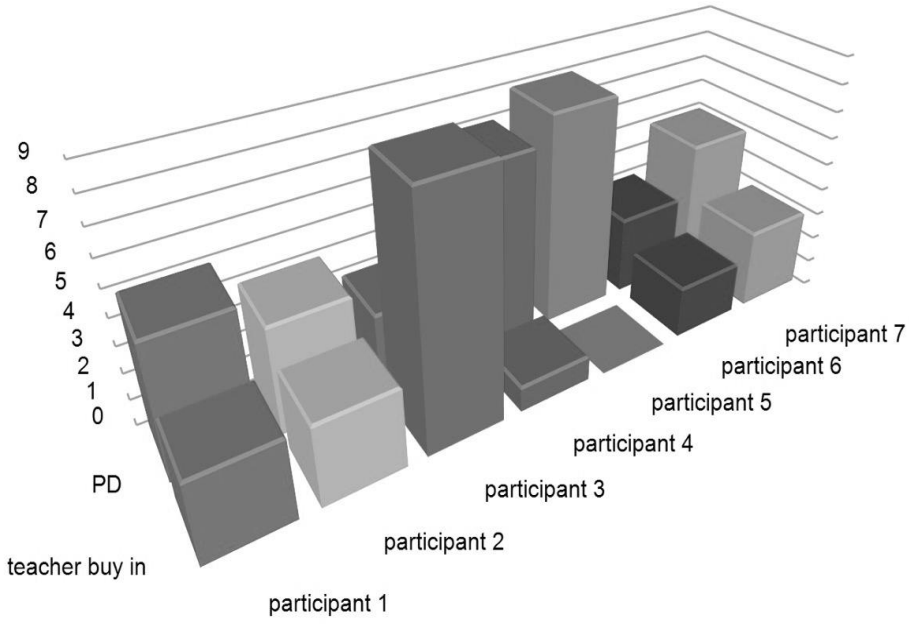
Appendix F

Critical Enablers for Implementing PBIS


7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
PD
teacher buy in
participant 1
participant 2
participant 3
participant 4
participant 5
participant 6
participant 7

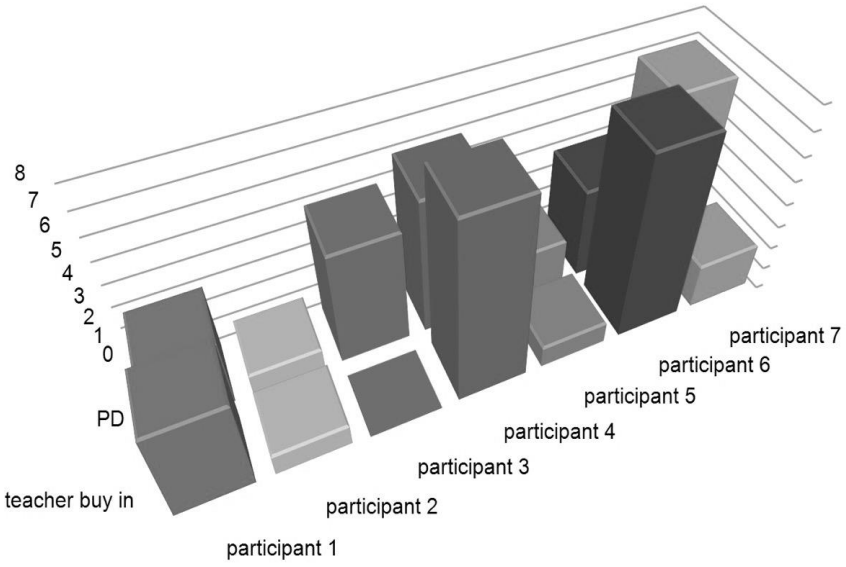
Appendix G

Significant Barriers to Implementing PBIS


9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
PD
teacher buy in
participant 1
participant 2
participant 3
participant 4
participant 5
participant 6
participant 7

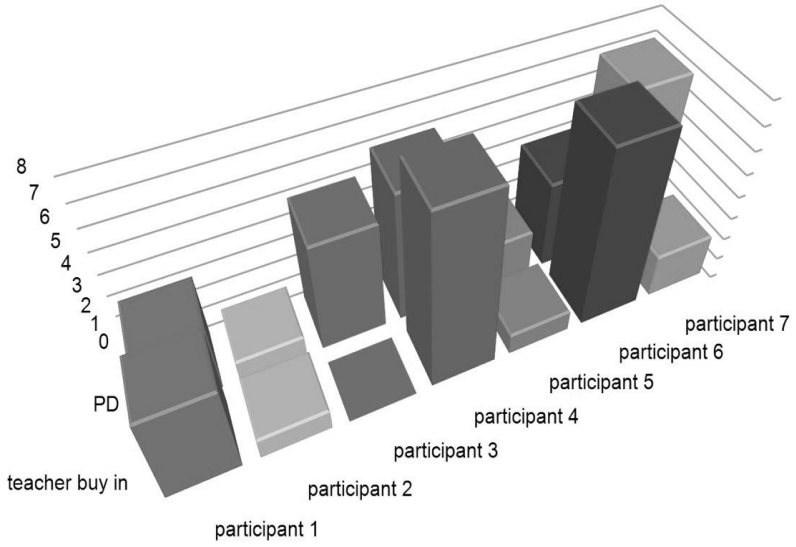
Appendix H

Critical Enablers for Sustaining PBIS


8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
PD
teacher buy in
participant 1
participant 2
participant 3
participant 4
participant 5
participant 6
participant 7

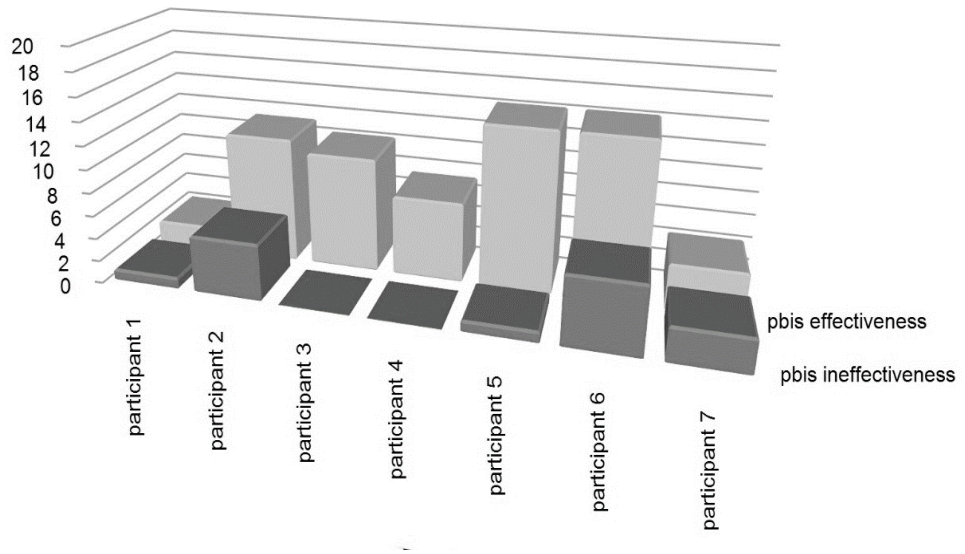
Appendix I

Significant Barrier in Sustaining PBIS


8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
PD
teacher buy in
participant 1
participant 2
participant 3
participant 4
participant 5
participant 6
participant 7

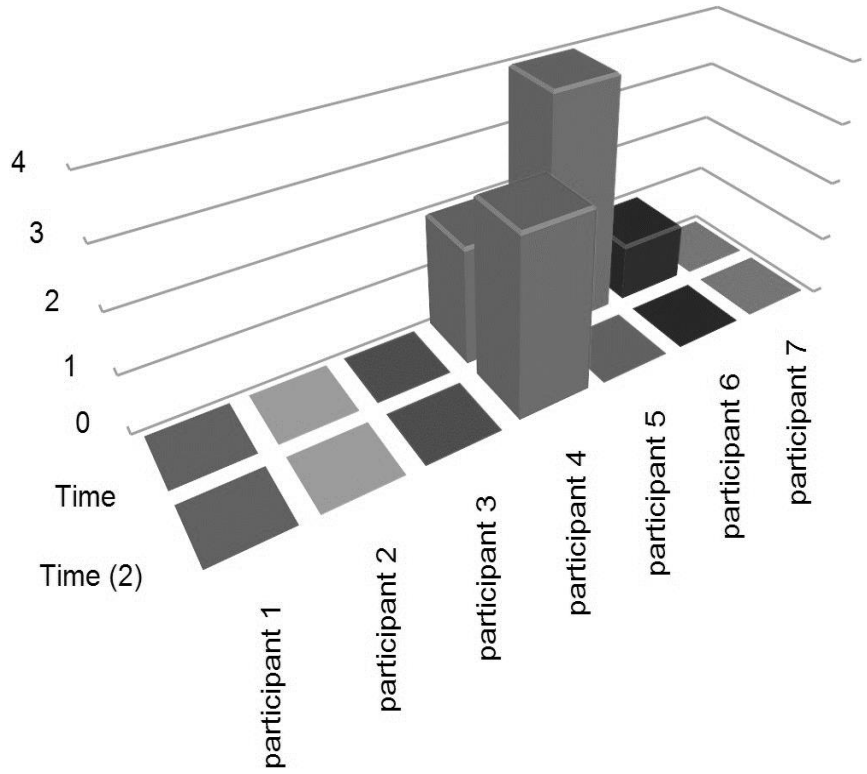
Appendix J

PBIS Effectiveness Versus Ineffectiveness


20
18
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
participant 1
participant 2
participant 3
participant 4
participant 5
participant 6
participant 7
pbis effectiveness
pbis ineffectiveness

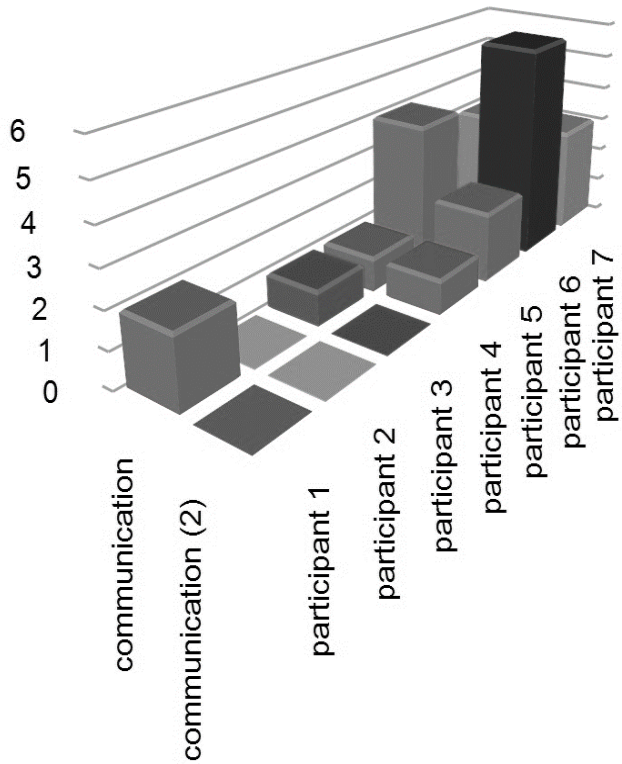
Appendix K

Time to Plan and Implement


4
3
2
1
0
Time
Time (2)
participant 1
participant 2
participant 3
participant 4
participant 5
participant 6
participant 7

Appendix L

Communication Among Peers and Administration


6
5
4
3
2
1
0
communication
communication (2)
participant 1
participant 2
participant 3
participant 4
participant 5
participant 6
participant 7