ANALYZING AND COMPARING SIMILARITIES AND PERCEPTIONS OF CURRENT STATUS AND OF YEARS OF EXPERIENCE REGARDING POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS (PBIS) TIER 1 IMPLEMENTATION ACROSS MULTIPLE K–6 SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the educational discussion focused on Tier 1 implementation of the behavioral management system known as positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) within three randomized K-6 elementary schools all at varying years of program implementation (Lower Elementary, K-3 Elementary, and K-6 Elementary school). Further, the study fixated on whether there were commonalities or differences in the perception of the current status of PBIS Tier 1 implementation which came in the form of a mixed-method approach for the participating general and special education teachers within those schools. An effective, consistent, and positive behavioral management system in schools is a relatively new concept with so many educational institutions in the past taking punitive approaches toward discipline. To take a more proactive approach toward behavior, schools have been utilizing PBIS to reshape the thinking of students and teachers to develop better and safer environments for learners and educators alike. The data collected in this study was analyzed using the Kruskal-Wallis H test and detailed thematic analysis. The qualitative analysis results revealed the presence of five major themes regarding feedback from staff on the factors and perceptions contributing to successful Tier 1 implementation of PBIS. Such themes consisted of: (a) Buy-in from stakeholders; (b) Needing the use of consistent language, communication, and policies across the school; (c) Informing and reminding students about the expectations on a daily basis; (d) Integrating the teaching of Values inside and outside of the classroom; and (e) Needing to implement constant and clear communication to all stakeholders. Results showed that while school-wide discipline systems were more prevalent, visible, or successful in the lower elementary school, the implementation of non-classroom management systems and classroom management systems of the respective schools was almost similar with the implementation of being mostly in place. Recommendations for future research include more understanding of the main needs of a school (resources, training,

time, evaluation, etc.) of a school, a heightened awareness of disciplinary action needs to be emphasized by means of restorative behavioral management practices for all staff, and a need for advanced tiers should be established for all students. Implications for positive change include increased teacher/school awareness, support, and guidance with PBIS, enhanced restorative behavioral management skills, and a positive shift in mindset regarding interacting with negative behaviors within school settings.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction and Background

In the world of education, schools must implement plans, systems, and consistent supports into action to care for students in all aspects of their educational career. Children come from diverse backgrounds and circumstances, and schools must plan to provide both academic and behavior supports for all students—no matter whether their homes are wealthy or impoverished, a list of traumatic personal experiences is apparent, or a student's life is filled with positive experiences. Teachers, staff, administrators, and leaders of educational organizations must provide supports for students that focus on positive relationships and behaviors while also learning how to engage in positive, authentic behaviors and mannerisms if they have not been apparent before. Time, effort, and dedication is required from every individual involved in order to help students succeed. Without this proper management within the school and classrooms, educators struggle both emotionally and mentally in trying to adhere to expectations put forth within the daily job duties while simultaneously combating behaviors that can differ in appearance and severity each day.

Classroom Management

In a highly effective classroom, teachers are equipped with the necessary tools, trainings, and resources that enable successful classroom and behavior management. Although these two types of management terms (classroom and behavior) can sometimes assume to be intertwined with one another, they are also different in many aspects. The term *classroom management,* based upon the writings of Webster (2020), includes "creating systems that support the kind of positive behavior across a classroom", while *behavior management* "is made of strategies and systems that will manage and eliminate difficult behaviors that prevent students from succeeding in an academic [setting]".

To elaborate further on classroom management, Rawlings Lester et al. (2017) defined this strategy as not only being responsible for producing desired behaviors and can "assist in both prevention and intervention of negative, chaotic classroom environments, which is a major contributor to teacher stress and burnout rates" (Browers & Tomic, as cited in Rawlings Lester et al., 2017, p. 399). Further, Webster (2020) provided a breakdown of each strategy. For classroom management, educators are strongly encouraged to set in place accountability, reinforcement, and follow the universal classroom management system that demands features such as structure (time management), climate, décor and classroom layout, learning activities, and teaching content like rules and routines, and the maintenance and monitoring of student behavior (Capizzi, as cited Rawlings Lester et al., 2017). Accountability plays a critical aspect in a proactive atmosphere, where students are held accountable for behaviors with the use of resources such as charts or token economies. Depending on the situation and student, reinforcement can be delivered in multiple methods, such as through verbal praise, breaks, or tangible rewards (Webster, 2020).

Structure consists of elements such as charts, classroom organization, schedules, rules, time management, and the like. With time management, educators typically focus on three different categories: allocated time, academic learning time, and time on task. Allocated time refers to mandated time to teach subjects throughout the day. Time on task can be seen when students are activity engrossed in the learning opportunities. Students learn based upon individual levels with academic learning time. Behar-Horenstein (as cited in Rawlings Lester et al., 2017) cited that "between 14% to 39% of academic learning time is lost due to both teacher and student initiations of non-instructional activities" (p. 400).

With school climate being regarded as the values, relationships, practices, and structures within a school setting, it is crucial for schools to establish a consistent framework for positive school climate because this aids in bettering the learning environment due to the predictability of what can be expected daily. By taking steps to highlight student work, create smooth transition opportunities between classes or activities, and posit rules within the classroom, teachers can lay the groundwork for positive and proactive classroom interactions and/or experiences.

To productively plan learning activities in a classroom, Rawlings Lester et al. (2017) highlighted that educators should have the wherewithal to note effective structure or pacing, levels of differentiation, or even types of supports needed for students. When learning activities are successfully delivered to students, the chances of productive academic and behavioral successes within a classroom increase.

Although every school is faced with different challenges and types of students, teachers must be consistent with one's own practices and leave students with productive experiences. The use of positive language, fair grading policies, high levels of enthusiasm, and passion causes students to mimic such behaviors in their lives and are willing to work hard for those adults who show craving for success.

Routines are considered a crucial characteristic and foundation to classroom management. The results of previous studies showed that “classroom management routines have a direct impact on social and children’s emotional development in addition to cognitive growth, and reduces problem behaviors” (Ostrosky et al., as cited in Rawlings Lester et al., 2017). Additionally, routines service with the successes of maximizing learning opportunities, aid in creating secure and safe learning environments, and guide in the heightening levels of engagement or motivation (Rawlings Lester et al., 2017). In every classroom, educators should

go through the process of introducing rules and routines, reteaching through examples and nonexamples, and reinforcing the desired behavior or expectations. This process may take several weeks at the beginning of any school year but should also be revisited throughout the school year to provide reminders and practice desired behaviors. The need for these positive outcomes "will allow the student[s] to understand what is expected and no margin of error for lack of understanding the desired routine or procedure," and procedures that "teach the student desired results often improve classroom management as well as lesson poor behavior" (Rawlings Lester et al., 2017, p. 404).

Behavior Management

Along with having effective and consistent classroom management skills that help shape the overall environments of the students, educators must also consider ways to learn, monitor, and implement behavior management skills. Depending on the educators and circumstances, behavioral management can provide teachers and students with the pathways to identifying reasons for behaviors, rationales of consequences, or chances to learn why certain behaviors are positively and negatively reinforced. When utilized effectively, students gain clear understandings of desired behaviors inside classrooms and know which actions should be deemed unsafe or inappropriate within a classroom or school setting.

Depending on the educator, students, and approaches, different behavioral management models can be recognized within school and classrooms in attempts to address the decline of unwanted behaviors and focus on the positive. For example, with assertive discipline, according to Martella et al. (2015), teachers must recognize his/her actions affect student behavior and set specific rules in the classroom. Teachers also following this model also put together a plan where students know explicit rules, routines, and expectations within the classroom. When a child engages in an undesired behavior, educators correlate that instance with appropriate negative or

positive consequences (Martella et al., 2015). Further, the logistical consequence model (Dreikurs, as cited in Martella et al., 2015) is built on the foundation of learning through interactions with our environment, leading to behaviors to be exposed to three types of consequences: natural, arbitrary, and logistical.

Natural consequences produce moments that typically occur without the intervening from teachers such as getting hurt after a fight, not believing someone who has a pattern of lying, or peers ignoring a child who is calling them names. Unfortunately, there are times where the effects of such consequences are not as severe enough to halt or lesson a behavior, which may lead to its continuation (Martella et al., 2015). In terms of utilizing effective behavior management strategies in the classroom, natural consequences typically would lend toward having proactive discussions of negative behaviors and the unwanted results that come from each. Not having this opportunity for collaborative growth can lead to children lacking a full understanding of the natural consequences for certain behaviors.

Arbitrary consequences fall in line with more of a punitive approach to dealing with negative behaviors, where the consequence "are not aligned with the offense" (Martella et al., 2015, p. 11). This means a child can be sent to the principal's office for fighting or to the in-school suspension room for continuously tapping a pencil in class. For a child who is not working or does not meet the expectations of an assignment, a teacher may determine that the loss of computer time is the appropriate consequence. Fine and Tomlinson (2000) described arbitrary consequences as reward versus punishment, where the majority—if not all—of the control falls in the hands of the adults and not the child, resulting in limited opportunities for the child to learn from his or her own behavior and a larger likelihood for a return of the misbehavior.

As defined in the article, "The Three R's of Logistical Consequences" (Education World, 2011b), logistical consequences are "ways in which adults structure learning opportunities for children when natural consequences pose too much harm". This type of consequence aims to stop a behavior while also helps to revisit a desired behavior, teach alternate behaviors, and remind children of the rules. There are three purposes of logistical behavior, with the first dealing with respect. Teachers must engage with students in sincere, positive ways, utilize little to no sarcasm, and convey additional levels of respect through nonverbal gestures as well. Communication needs to be calm but firm, and the teacher holds onto the consistency of administering relevant consequences (Education World, 2011b). An important focus of logistical consequences is these must be relevant to the behavior or actions being displayed. This will help students see the cause and effect of the behavior, the teacher references the violation of a specific rule and places the focus on individuality and ownership of behaviors (Education World, 2011b). As such, these types of consequences must be realistic in nature and something that the teacher and student can follow through on, with clear timeframes for expectations along with the educator ensuring that the implementation of desired behaviors takes place.

With this mindset in a classroom, students are expected to take the reins on fixing a problem that has been broken by the child. For example, if one knocks a peer off the playground, the child will stop, apologize, and help the victim get back up. Additionally, when students do not care for the established rules, such as when two children are talking to one another during class when not supposed to, loss of privileges occur where they then sit by themselves. If a child were to speak rudely to a teacher, the teacher should not respond or engage until the change redirects to utilizing more respectful language. Finally, if there is a situation where a student becomes angered and frustrated causing disturbances for themselves or others, taking a break is a

necessary approach to allow for deescalation and regrouping to occur, enabling the child to rediscover focus and positive control with his actions (Education World, 2011a). For schools and classrooms yearning to find programs and systems that work in ways that promote authentic, restorative changes in behavior, establishing positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) not only helps children to recognize and learn positive behaviors, but enables educators to play equal roles in making sure these expectations are met using nonpunitive measures.

Developing Classroom PBIS

The process of ensuring an effective combination of classroom and behavior management is a pertinent system to establish because children must have feelings of safety and comfort in a classroom while taking an active role in understanding the rules or routines of what is expected. This ultimately leads to better classroom performance—both academically and behaviorally—and declining instances of severe consequences like suspensions or expulsions. When desired behaviors are displayed, the teacher must be a consistent advocate in recognizing such acts in practical manners (verbally and/or nonverbally) to aid in the increased likelihood of the behaviors occurring in the future with the use of PBIS.

According to Lee (2021b), PBIS is identified as "a proactive approach schools use to improve school safety and promote positive behavior. The focus of PBIS is prevention, not punishment". With having PBIS in schools and classrooms, children and teachers can administer the most appropriate consequences (positive or negative) that aligns with a given behavior. Further, schools utilize explicit instructional methods to educate students on accepted behaviors along and provide opportunities to practice these and receive feedback (Lee, 2021b).

While PBIS takes several years of consistent implementation to perfect and improve upon, there are multiple levels to the process to aid in different levels of behaviors. The Center on PBIS (2021) highlighted a three-tiered framework. Tier 1, Universal Prevention, lays the

foundation for behavioral and academic successes by supporting the entire school population in finding individual, group, or whole school achievements. When students do not find success at the ground level, these students (about 15–20% of the population) are given Tier 2, or Targeted Prevention, supports at a more frequent level, which helps with more opportunities to practice desired behaviors and develop individualize skills needed to promote more positive outcomes (Center on PBIS, 2021). Finally, for those who are not showing progress with these interventions, roughly 5% of the students receive the most intensive, one-on-one supports within Tier 3: Intensive, Individualized Prevention. At this level, formal assessments can be utilized for academics and behavior to guide in formulating a plan for the identified child (Center on PBIS, 2021).

Although it starts with a meaningful and detailed process of managing funds, resources, and trainings, educators need to have efficacious classroom methods that sustain an authentic environment and learning opportunities to implement PBIS and its tiers with efficiency. The classroom must be designed according to the safety and support of all students, routines need to be predictable and explicit, educators must be prompt and active in supervision, and there should be multiple pathways to respond to behaviors accordingly (Center on PBIS, 2021). Hence, teachers and students act as partners in recognizing negative behaviors, providing a correlating consequence, and learning how to improve upon a child's actions to regain focus on the trails toward academic and behavioral achievements.

Research Problem

Over the past several years, PBIS systems have been implemented within elementary schools nationwide with success. Researchers have outlined the critical components that aid schools in setting a foundation for successful implementation and sustainability of this model across the entire school; however, at the Tier 1 level, there has been minimal research conducted

highlighting comparisons of elementary schools and whether the same approaches—or similar mindsets of priority areas of implementation at the primary level—have been taken across the K-6 realm to establish the system. Even though schools may be at different stages of implementation fidelity at Tier 1, it was crucial to determine whether there were commonalities to ways schools have established this tier within classroom and nonclassroom settings or whether elementary schools settle on approaches that best suite one's needs to look at possible patterns of successes but also challenges and barriers to its implementation even if schools are at varying years of Tier 1 implementation. Through this study, the researcher aimed to bridge the identified gap regarding the comparison of fidelity.

Although it was difficult to find the number of U.S. schools who have been unsuccessful with PBIS Tier 1 implementation fidelity, there are several clear factors that would correlate with the diminishing of the program effectiveness in schools. Coffey and Horner (2012) identified key components to PBIS sustainability, including contextually appropriate innovation, a shared vision within schools, administrative support, ongoing technical and training assistance, data-based decision making and sharing, and continuous review/revision of a program. The current researcher aimed to identify the presence and strength of relationships between participant responses and research on successful implementation/sustainability to determine whether schools are working toward finding those achievements. Additionally, the researcher sought to determine what specific areas of growth that schools need guidance on to ensure the program does not deteriorate over time.

Purpose

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to gather teacher perceptions on the implementation fidelity of Tier 1 PBIS across multiple elementary school settings. Such findings then led to analyzing the focal points of this study to determine whether chosen elementary

schools share commonalities of successes and barriers of what PBIS tier 1 characteristics were currently in place, not yet in place, or partially in place, and whether years of implementation correlate with the impact of such perceptions by the general and special education teachers. Using closed-ended, Likert scale questions and open-ended responses, the researcher aimed to find patterns within the study and gain detailed feedback on each school's implementation processes.

The mixed methodology used for this study included both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. The researcher administered an instrument consisting of a portion of the Self-Assessment Survey (SAS) and three open-ended questions to gain insight into the area of focus. For this study, the SAS was amended to only focus on the current status of PBIS features, and not the priority for improvement, as the purpose was to analyze what was or was not present within the school settings. The three open-ended questions assisted with gaining more insight into the features and teacher perceptions of implementation status. The population included both general and special education teachers across three elementary schools (K-6). The randomized sample comprised of up to 25 teachers in the two districts in which the study was conducted, and participants were given roughly 2 weeks to complete the survey via Google Forms. This aided in generating quick and accurate data that were analyzed in two ways. First, a correlative approach was used for the quantitative date to generate relations of participant responses to the Likert scale questions. For the open-ended responses, a dissection of the answers led to finding similar themes across all teachers and settings.

Research Questions

Three research questions were developed to guide this study:

1. What are the main factors contributing to a successful implementation at the Tier 1 level of PBIS?

2. Does the overall perception of status levels of PBIS implementation show differences and/or similarities within several K-6 schools?
3. Does the number of years of Tier 1 implementation impact the current status of school-wide systems, nonclassroom settings, and classroom settings?

Rationale for the Study

As it will be seen later in the research, there are specific ways and strategies to ensure that PBIS Tier 1 implementation is prosperous within elementary schools. While schools and teams may take differing approaches to ensure the foundational growth, the focus of this research was to determine whether schools share the same perceptions and mindsets on what features of the implementation were currently in place, not yet in place, or partially in place within the school for Tier 1 inside and outside of the classroom along with attention on school-wide efforts.

Although it is difficult to find research identifying such comparisons in schools, the researcher hoped to locate possible correlations and determine whether elementary schools and teachers establish similar approaches to having a strong PBIS model, or whether it is based on what the staff and teams take different approaches to its execution. Additionally, if participants of the study showed the same aspects of the behavioral features being selected, the researcher would have taken a more detailed look on the status of each (i.e., in place, partially in place, not in place) to determine possible connections to implementation. Further, the participants answered open-ended questions regarding current status within the three focus areas to gain more detailed insight on into the elementary implementation plans.

Understanding elementary PBIS systems will help guide future schools in determining not only the best course of actions to begin building the groundwork of PBIS, but also take into consideration key areas—no matter the years of Tier 1 fidelity—still need to be introduced or approved upon, and a plan of action can be developed. A comparison of school systems would

lend itself to possible collaborative opportunities between administration or staff on PBIS implementation at the universal level and spearhead chances of sharing resources, strategies, and approaches for other schools to become better in areas of need.

To conduct the research, the most effective method was to choose schools that housed students within grades K-6, but which were also at varying years of PBIS implementation. Another contributing factor was to also decide on completing the study within neighboring districts or ones of greater distance. After investigating local schools and districts, the researcher decided upon to complete the study within three western Pennsylvania schools located roughly 10 to 15 minutes outside of downtown Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, all of which are in Allegheny County. The sample of the study only included male and female general and special education teachers, as the educators were the major focus with these individuals being inside of the classrooms. The inclusion criteria were aligned with the PBIS Self-Assessment Survey (SAS), in which participants needed to provide individualized feedback and perceptions on both the status and priority for improvement within four behavioral systems such as school-wide, nonclassroom settings, classroom settings, and individual current systems.

Definitions of Terms

Arbitrary consequences: These are a punitive approach to dealing with negative behaviors in which the consequence "are not aligned with the offense" (Martella et al., 2015, p. 11).

Behavior management: This term includes "strategies and systems that will manage and eliminate difficult behaviors that prevent students from succeeding in an academic [setting]" (Webster, 2020).

Behavior management systems: These systems can be classified as taking the necessary steps to lead students to increased motivation toward changing actions or interactions such as

classroom behavior or problem-solving skills. Some specific types of systems might include teacher-specific systems, reward systems for students, and databases to track information about behaviors (ScholarChip, 2019).

Classroom management: This involves "Creating systems that support the kind of positive behavior across a classroom" (Webster, 2020).

Discipline: In the context of education, discipline refers to using rules, strategies, or methods in response to positive or negative student behaviors.

Expulsion: This is the permanent removal of the student from a school due to violating the policies put forth at the most severe levels.

Implementation fidelity: This is exhibited by schools that have established a PBIS team, complete required surveys and assessments with 75% accuracy or more and continue to be sustained within a school with similar or increased assessment percentage.

Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1997: The IDEA confirmed free and appropriate public education for students with disabilities to meet individualized educational needs while preparing students to become successful citizens in the real world before and upon graduation (American Psychological Association, 2017).

Logistical consequences: These are "ways in which adults structure learning opportunities for children when natural consequences pose too much harm," and this type of consequence aims to stop a behavior while also helps to revisit a desired behavior, teach alternate behaviors, and remind children of the rules (Education World, 2011b, p. 11).

Natural consequences: These produce moments that typically occur without the intervening from teachers such as a student getting hurt after a fight, having others not believe

them due to a pattern of lying, or being ignored while calling others names (Martella et al., 2015).

No Child Left Behind: The NCLB Act was a major law from 2002–2015 that held schools accountable for how students achieved. It aimed to provide increased educational opportunities specifically for students in poverty, of color, receiving special education services, and those with limited or no English-speaking skills (Lee, 2021a).

Out-of-school-suspension: OSS describes "the temporary removal of a student from his or her regular educational setting for a violation of school policies or rules. During suspension, a student is not allowed to attend school or attend school activities for a set length of time" (School Discipline Support Initiative, 2020a).

Physical restraint: This is "a personal restriction that immobilizes or reduces the ability of a student to move his or her torso, arms, legs, or head freely" (U.S. Department of Education, 2012, p. 10).

Positive behavioral interventions and supports: Also known as School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS), PBIS is a multi-tiered approach that is "designed to foster safety, prosocial behavior, and academic readiness by outlining a structure to explicitly teach and reinforce these behaviors in school" leading to enhancing social and academic outcomes for all learners (Solomon et al., 2015, p. 175).

Self-Assessment Survey (SAS): This is an annual assessment consisting of 46 questions measuring staff perceptions on priority of improvement and implementation status within four behavioral focus areas: school-wide systems, nonclassroom setting systems, classroom systems, and individual student systems (PBISApps, 2019; Solomon et al., 2015).

Zero-tolerance policy: A term first used around 1986, zero-tolerance policies were originally meant to target serious offenses such as gang-related fights or possession of drugs while on a school campus; however, they have shifted to being used as a means of implementing severe, punitive disciplinary action to students (e.g., out-of-school suspensions or expulsions) regardless of the type of misbehavior displayed (School Discipline Support Initiative, 2020b).

Summary

The rest of this study is formatted into chapters, a bibliography, and appendices with supporting documentation for the study. Chapter 2 includes a review of the literature about PBIS, its critical components, and the importance of such as system within schools for both students and staff alike. In Chapter 3, the researcher describes the design and methodology of the current study, consisting of instrumentation, participants, site selection, data analysis distribution and analyzation, along with considerations and limitations are discussed as well. In Chapter 4, a discussion of the findings and an elaboration of the analysis of the data are presented. Finally, Chapter 5 contains a summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations for this study. The bibliography and appendices are located at the end of the study.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) is becoming a more prominent focus within schools nationwide over the recent years due to the vitality of taking more proactive, restorative stances toward responding to negative behaviors within school settings. This methodology is not only used within the classroom, but is a school-wide approach in which students, staff, administrators, and families can take part in with a focus on desired values and behaviors as a whole school, classroom, or an individual basis. Establishing a strong foundation of PBIS in the classroom and school is the most critical component to ensure the highest levels of effectiveness for years to come. In this literature review, the researcher discusses the history of PBIS and past ineffective practices used in schools to target behaviors, defines PBIS, outlines the critical aspects of successfully implementing the program at the Tier 1 level, assessing for fidelity, and identifying ways to productively sustain Tier 1 of PBIS.

Research Questions

Three research questions were developed to guide this study:

1. What are the main factors contributing to a successful implementation at the Tier 1 level of PBIS?
2. Does the overall perception of status levels of PBIS implementation show differences and/or similarities within several K-6 schools?
3. Does the number of years of Tier 1 implementation impact the current status of school-wide systems, nonclassroom settings, and classroom settings?

Historical Background

In the early years prior to school-wide PBIS being invented, many schools across the nation determined the most appropriate ways of handling negative or unwanted behaviors came in forms of the zero-tolerance policies, physical restraints, suspensions, and/or school resource

officers (SROs). In the 1950s, it was not uncommon for restraints to be used within the school setting; however, many school districts were unable to provide safe regulations so that students would not be encountered with harm bodily injury, or death (Freeman & Sugai, 2013). According to Freeman and Sugai (2013), investigations in 1998 revealed "142 deaths related to the use of restraint[s] over a 10-year period," and "33% of these deaths were caused by asphyxia (p. 428). The authors continued by mentioning this is not a singular issue within one state. Managing problem behaviors is a nation-wide dilemma, and "31 states have a requirement or a recommendation that school districts implement SW-PBIS as a framework to prevent problem behaviors and reduce the need for restraint or seclusion" (Freeman & Sugai, 2013, p. 431).

Until recently, zero-tolerance policies have been used within a multitude of school settings in hopes of eliminating or decreasing problem behaviors of students within all grades. This term originated from the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986, and was meant as method of halting serious offences such as weapon possession, selling drugs, or gang-related activities; however, it has been expanded to even minor classroom offenses like talking back or causing disruptions (School Discipline Support Initiative, 2020a). The move to a zero-tolerance approach in schools when encountering behaviors, while thought to be a preventative measure to decreasing or halting such instances, has produced undesirable outcomes without an effective behavior management system with long-lasting effects on students. Puckett et al. (2019) focused on the negative impact of punitive school discipline across a number of states, concluding that there is a higher likelihood of students entering the criminal justice system if infractions are committed while in school. Not only do "children perceive negative treatment in schools as a reflection on their character," becoming more disinterested in school, the "zero tolerance discipline policies have also contributed to the school-to-prison pipeline" (Puckett et al., 2019, p. 1).

In turn, Puckett et al. (2019) mentioned several laws and changes are either being encouraged or mandated to ultimately aid students and find better methods to such harsh practices. In 2014, the U.S. Department of Education strongly prescribed districts find alternatives to suspensions and expulsions to ensure students are not missing instructional opportunities (Puckett et al., 2019). It was strongly noted by the authors in the same article that suspensions do not reduce the reoccurrence of behaviors, and such desired effects of the decrease in behaviors (as originally planned when first being implemented in the 1980s) are not occurring with the zero-tolerance policy in place.

Looking into changing both the mindset and approaches toward behavior, research was steered by Steinberg and Lacoe (2017) concerning the known information surrounding school discipline reform and the alternatives to suspensions and expulsions. It was concluded that although there is a nationwide decline in out-of-school suspensions (OSS) and expulsions, there is an overwhelming response of disciplinary actions to lower-level, nonviolent behaviors. Unfortunately, without having a consistent and resilient behavioral management system in place that can be utilized by trained staff and administrators, the outcomes of schools with higher suspension and expulsion rates correlate with increased numbers of teacher turnover and attrition (Steinberg & Lacoe, 2017). Often, teachers search for jobs elsewhere due to feeling school environments are violent or unsafe when such severe student behaviors toward others can be consistently apparent without signs of change, leading students to be removed from the classroom or school setting. As early as 2015–16, these writers noted that “23 of the 100 largest school districts nationwide had implemented policy reforms requiring nonpunitive discipline strategies and/or limits to the use of suspensions” (Steinberg & Lacoe, 2017, p. 44). To make this change across the nation even more widespread, schools also needed to focus on how to provide

effective and safe trainings on restorative behavioral management practices if SROs are a necessity within buildings.

In the early 1960s, the original role of SROs was to develop a rapport with students and place a more positive outlook on law enforcement with youth. Conversely, this led SROs being at the forefront of handling student behaviors in untrained fashion as a common practice (McGinn, 2017). For example, McGinn described situations of unsafe, dangerous interactions where students have been shot with tasers, and met with force and physical restraint resulting in physical harm. The term *physical restraint*, according to the U.S. Department of Education (2012), refers to "a personal restriction that immobilizes or reduces the ability of a student to move his or her torso, arms, legs, or head freely" (p. 10). This report indicates that such acts toward a child does not improve their behavior, but conversely makes it more likely for the targeted youth to act out in aggression or display defiance in the future. Having a greater understanding and purpose for change in handling behaviors within educational settings, researchers looked for ways to bring about improvement across the nation with a behavioral management system. Behavior management systems can be classified as taking the necessary steps to lead students to increased motivation toward changing actions or interactions such as classroom behavior or problem-solving skills. Some specific types of systems might include teacher-specific systems, reward systems for students, and databases to track information about behaviors (ScholarChip, 2019).

Based upon historical details and approaches toward negative disciplinary strategies with a dire need of change, research began in the 1980s out of the University of Oregon entailing demonstrations, evaluation projects, and research students. It was determined that heightened attention was required toward prevention, research-based practices, school-wide systems, student

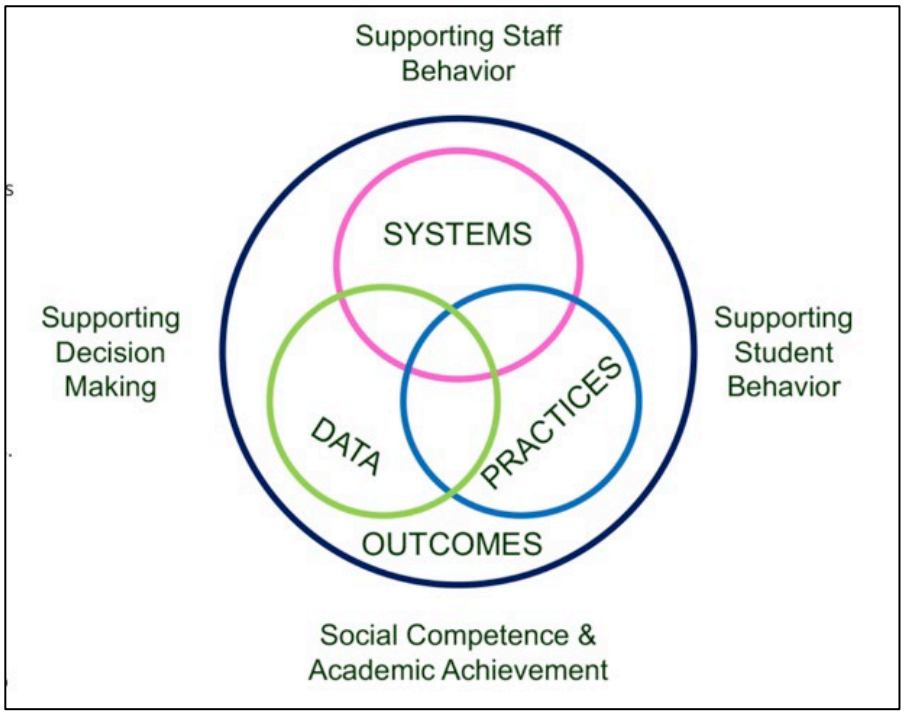
outcomes, and team-based implementation (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012). The same authors discussed the progress that occurred during the 1990s, in which the reauthorization of the Individual with Disabilities Act of 1997 introduced a grant to "establish a national Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports was legislated to disseminate and provide technical assistance to school on evidence-based practices for improving supports for students" (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012, p. 1). The official development of the first PBIS Center was underway with partnerships from top universities such as Oregon, Missouri, South Florida, Kansas, and Kentucky. Fast-forwarding to the 2000s, as Sugai and Simonsen wrote, the PBIS Center had been well-established for 14 years with accomplishments of delivering technical assistance, professional development, and other means of practices or strategies to over 16,000 schools.

Defining PBIS

While there is continued pressure on schools to improve the behavioral outcomes and learning environments for all students across the nation, positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) are being implemented within K-12 settings as a means of a school-wide preventative measure. PBIS can be defined as "A framework or approach comprised of intervention practices and organizational systems for establishing the social culture, learning and teaching environment, and individual behavior supports needed to achieve academic and social success for all students" (Ryoo et al., 2017, p. 630). PBIS is a way to assist everyone, including students with disabilities, and—through a four-element approach (as seen in Figure 1)—integrate and improve all data regarding the practices affecting student outcomes and systems. All four should be utilized by schools to build an effective foundation and ongoing platform for PBIS.

Figure 1

Four PBIS Elements



Note. Retrieved from the OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (2021).

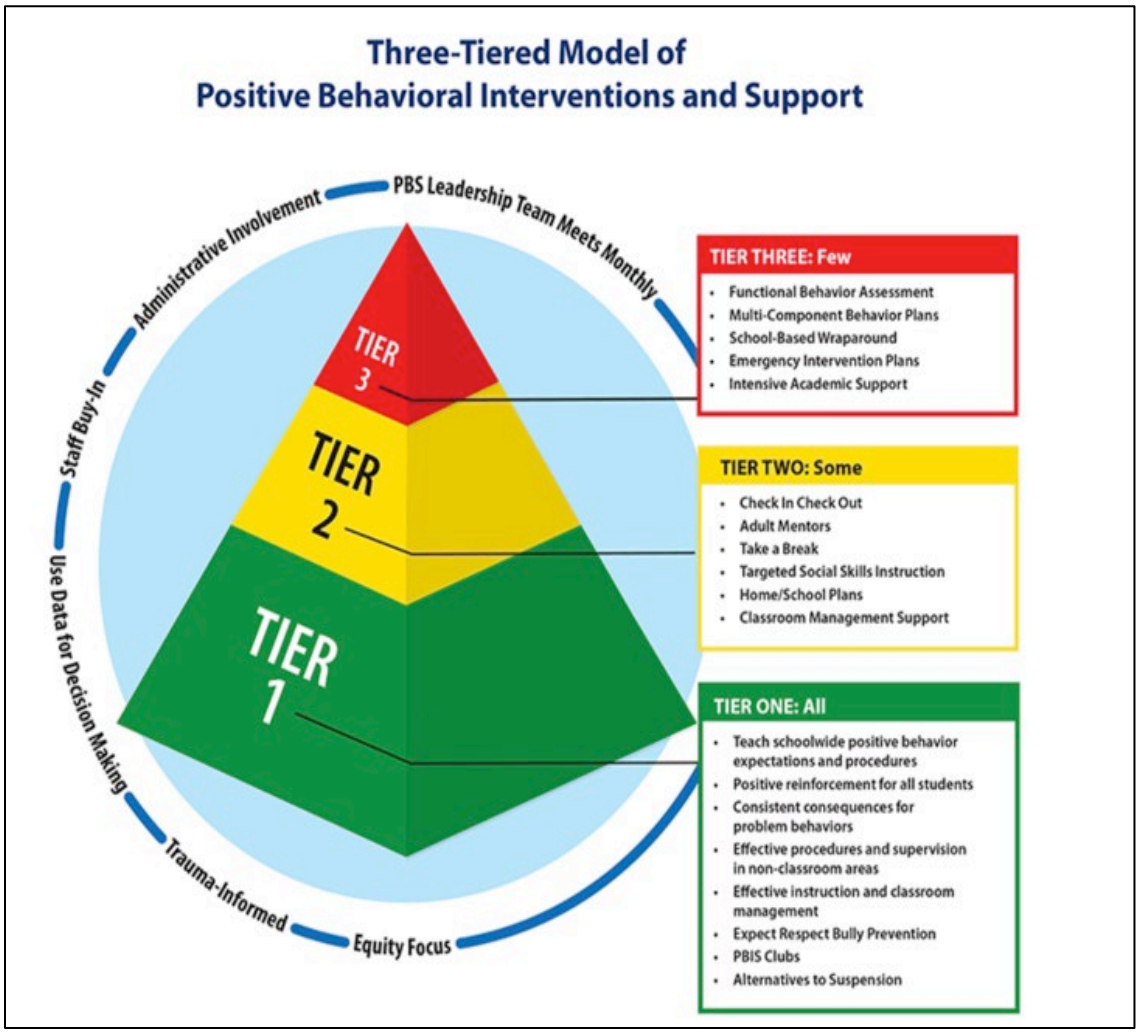
Systems refers to the supports that can be implemented over time to aid in the successful sustainment of PBIS such as with the school, district, community, nonclassroom, and individual. Data is considered to entail documentation like ODRs, classroom/nonclassroom observations, teacher feedback, success of interventions used on the student(s), and the like to aid in selecting, monitoring, and evaluating outcomes across the three tiers. Practices involve the use of evidence-based strategies implemented to aligned focus behaviors to develop improvement and replacement behaviors. Finally, outcomes are what schools can achieve through all three previous elements when put into place and the effects of all stakeholders working together to ensure achievements are occurring within the learning community (OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2021).

Continuing, these four elements of PBIS are guided by six important principles, as identified by the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports of Arizona (2021). These principles include developing a repertoire of evidence-based behavior and academic strategies, data-based decision making, arranging the environment to prevent or halt problem behaviors, encourage, teaching prosocial skills and behaviors, employing universal screening measures with ongoing progress monitoring, and implementing scientifically based interventions and supports.

Further, it is not a curriculum to purchase, but a commitment to systemic change of student behaviors (OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2021). With about 25,000 schools within the United States adopting this model, Ryoo et al. (2017) explained that over time, with consistent and successful implementation, outcomes include reduction in overall numbers of office discipline referrals (ODRs), increased instructional time, academic achievement, satisfaction about school safety, and prosocial behaviors and peer relationships. This preventative model is broken down into a three-tiered approach (see Figure 2) and aims to support students who stronger, more consistent interventions and strategies over time if those individuals are unable to find success in previous tiers.

Figure 2

Three-Tiered Model of PBIS



Note. A visual overview of the three PBIS tiers and example interventions within each stage (RESA: Serving Leadership Collaboration Excellence, 2020).

Tier 1

The initial tier of PBIS is known as Tier 1, or Universal Prevention (OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2021), where the entire student body receives school and classroom-wide interventions and supports. In this tier, a foundation is established for delivering "regular, proactive support and preventing unwanted

behaviors" (OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2021) and is where expected behaviors are taught, increased opportunities for academic and behavioral successes are granted, and student/teacher relationships are strengthened (Gage et al., 2020). McDaniel et al. (2017) noted that this tier is "mainly intended to prevent problem behaviors across the school by establishing and instructing schoolwide behavior expectations" (p. 35). To establish this tier, the same researchers recommend the development of a PBIS team that consist of eight to 12 staff, establishing three to five positively stated expectations for the entire school, a detailed reward system, and the establishment of an approach that heightens climate, increases opportunity to collect accurate data, and allows for problem-solving approaches to reduce problem behaviors. PBIS teams and schools typically receiving ongoing training to assist with the development of operations for defining and writing behavior referrals, creating behavioral matrices highlighting rules within specific areas of the school, PBIS behavior-specific language related to the school expectations, and team/incentive schedules.

Tier 2

Whereas Tier 1 interventions and supports are being implemented for all students within an educational setting, there may be some students who do not show signs of progression or positive responses to such strategies. The primary focus of Tier 2, also known as the *Secondary Prevention* tier (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports of Arizona, 2021), is for the 15-20% – about 10 students or more – of the total population who are "at risk for developing more serious problem behavior before they start" (OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2021). Within this tier, interventions are not only more intensive, but additional materials are needed to place better focus on the smaller group of individuals. Fluke and Peterson (2013) described the types of interventions for these at-risk

students may include behavior sheets, small group sessions with the school counselor, having an adult mentor, additional instructional time teaching the desired behaviors more explicitly, heightened opportunities for positive reinforcement, Check-In-Check-Out (CICO), etc. The Center on PBIS (2021) provided additional guidance to Tier 2 interventions but highlights the necessity for data collection and monitoring to accurately align interventions to the student(s) and assess to determine if adjustments need made. Even though there is a PBIS team to discuss the Tier 1 implementation and fidelity, a separate team for Tier 2 must meet regularly and may consist of members like a Tier 2 coordinator, school administrator, behavioral specialist, and classroom teacher. Unfortunately, there will be students who—after weeks of data collection and monitoring—do not successfully show progress with Tier 2 interventions and supports. When this happens, more intensive and ongoing interventions must take place at the Tier 3 level.

Tier 3

Tier 3 is the highest and most intensive step in the PBIS process for students (only 1% to 5% of the population) who do not respond to Tier 1 and 2 supports (Center on PBIS, 2021). There are several factors needed to ensure a highly effective Tier 3 plan is in place for general and special education students. A multidisciplinary team consisting of administration, a coach, and others equipped with knowledge of providing these supports within the school already. More importantly, an individual on the committee must have experience with applied behavior analysis or multi-agency support (Center on PBIS, 2021). Fluke and Peterson (2013) provided example interventions at this advanced level that include a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) "to determine the events preceding and following a behavior, which is then used to create an individual behavior plan," (p. 4). After the FBA is conducted, teams can develop aligned strategies for preventing unwanted behaviors, positively reinforcing desired behaviors, teaching expected behaviors, and/or the reduction of rewards for unwanted behaviors (Center on PBIS,

2021). Further, additional practices may consist of producing individualized counseling sessions or meeting with mental health professionals (Fluke & Peterson, 2013) or wraparound services that "involve working with students and the adults invested in their success to identify how a student's natural support systems, strengths, and needs can work together to improve their outcomes" (Center on PBIS, 2021).

This three-tiered approach has ben proven to be an efficacious system in school settings. The preventative opportunities that occur help and guide children to learning how positive behaviors and interactions ultimately lead to more welcoming academic and behavioral opportunities. Even though the planning and execution process of all three levels takes years to improve and assess, it is pertinent that educational organizations take great considerations and detail at the very beginning to construct a strong level of implementation beginning with Tier 1.

Process of Developing Successful Tier 1 PBIS Implementation

Within this section, findings are aligned to Research Question 1, which asked: What are the main factors contributing to a successful implementation at the Tier 1 level of PBIS? Anytime programmatic changes within, or across, educational settings take place, there must be planned and purposeful approaches to ensure success of fidelity implementation from all involved. As cited in the article from Bradshaw and Pas (2011), Adelman and Taylor (1997) described the four stages of implementation in detail beginning with *creating readiness*, which can also be classified as *identifying predictable failures* (Evanovich & Scott, 2016).

In this phase, the buy-in of stakeholders is critical to support change. When thinking of implementing PBIS, building such readiness requires resources, materials, staff, and time along with ongoing professional development and training. To support the systematic change, schools must work together and cooperate on the most problematic areas and where to begin with preventing unwanted behaviors from occurring and "predict problem behaviors by type, location,

time, and individual" (Evanovich & Scott, 2016, p. 5). This can be done through collaboration of difficulties observed within the school to determine frequency of where behaviors may occur the most. While the use of previous data is much more accurate and beneficial, something like a brainstorming and mapping session would be a productive starting point for schools who have yet to begin that process. From there, PBIS teams can begin creating plans for aligned resources, teacher/classroom needs, and strategies toward such obstacles.

The second phase, *Initial Implementation* or *Developing Preventative Strategies* (Evanovich & Scott, 2016), is where leaders and team members strive to ensure all staff are supported and guided as the new program begins. In terms of PBIS, this is where weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly meetings occur, a PBIS coach is established, and leadership can conduct informal walkthroughs or hold frequent check-ins to answer any questions or provide feedback on the program. Further, schools should then move to constructing preventative strategies for these potential focal areas and "be driven by finding those strategies that can create the highest probability of success in preventing the identified problem," according to Scott (as cited in Evanovich & Scott, 2016, p. 6). Schools must strongly consider developing lessons, curriculum, and units to address the arrangement of classrooms and delivery of rules with examples and nonexamples. Based upon the works of Kerr and Nelson (as cited in Evanovich & Scott, 2016), schools should develop three to five positively stated rules that are then explicitly taught in high-traffic areas such as restrooms, playground, hallways, cafeteria, classrooms, and on the bus. When plans and strategies are in place for PBIS at the school-wide and classroom levels, teams must act upon individual/whole-group ownership through consistency and sustainability.

The tertiary phase, *Institutionalization*, places emphasis on the ownership and uniformity of changes put forth within the program, identifying any preexisting or futuristic

barriers/challenges that may be presented. Moreover, maintain consistent and substantial interventions, adults across the school setting must uphold these high expectations, knowing that PBIS will not be effective without this dedication from all parties. Clonan and colleagues (as cited in Evanovich & Scott, 2016) noted, "Consistency is enhanced by having a PBIS team look at data, make decisions, and report back to the full faculty and staff on a monthly basis," and described that "this team is made up of an administrator and five to eight individuals who are representatives of all school faculty and staff," (p. 6). This part of the process is detrimental to success because teams can either continue pushing forward with initiatives or revise parts of the system to improve upon. The groundwork for Tier 1 of PBIS continues to take shape, the evaluation of the process is an ongoing format that will build upon the successes of the program but aid in revisions of what needs to be improved.

Finally, Adelman and Taylor (as cited in Bradshaw & Pas, 2011) concluded with the fourth phase, *Ongoing Evolution and Renewal*, where the program must continuously meet evaluative measures and data-based decision-making to guarantee further advancement. This data collection can come in many forms such as staff, parent, and student surveys, data meetings, evidence-based assessments, informal conversations, ongoing meetings, professional development, and the like (Evanovich & Scott, 2016). By evaluating the effectiveness and overall progress, PBIS teams begin to set goals for how and when referrals can be written, which students may need additional supports and interventions, or specific areas of the school in which more focus needs to be placed to decrease problematic behaviors from occurring.

Assessing Tier 1 PBIS Implementation Fidelity

Mercer et al. (2017) referred to *fidelity implementation* as “the extent to which an intervention is delivered as intended” (p. 195). These authors then discussed the need for schools to self-evaluate on the implementation of SWPBIS to guide with action planning and the

monitoring of systems. To achieve this, several fidelity measures have been used within a multitude of schools but for varying purposes to provide data on the impact of the behavioral interventions and supports. One of the most critical components of ensuring PBIS implementation is, or will be, in place is to utilize proper assessment tools within the school setting. Such measures allow staff, PBIS team members, and PBIS coaches to analyze the attainments of PBIS; generate perceptions of growth, strengths, or focal points; and aid in the development of action planning to either improve a tier within the model or progress toward advanced tiers.

The Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI) is an assessment that guides teams in determining steps to implement PBIS tiers, can be used to determine whether teams need PBIS or monitor progress of the tiers, and is a tool correlated with recognition status by the state. This is a 45-item inventory across all three tiers and is completed either quarterly or annually. The goal for teams is to score 70% or more on the items throughout a series of assessment sessions, and if success progress continues, the SWPBIS teams can move toward annual completion of the TFI (PBISApps, 2019).

The School-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET) consists of 28 items, and is an annual evaluation. This is completed based on interviews of staff and students, product review, and school walkthroughs. The implementation criteria are 80% on Behavioral Expectations Taught subscale and total (Mercer et al., 2017).

Further, Mercer et al. (2017) described the School-Wide Benchmarks of Quality (BOQ) as a 53-item assessment that is utilized for annual evaluations and aids in the action planning of PBIS. The SWPBIS team members, along with external or internal coaches, may complete this assessment with data being collected and analyzed by the coach. Implementation criteria

constitutes as a 70% benchmark measure. This assessment gives schools access to examining Tier 1 and determining its levels of effectiveness along with classifying strengths and weaknesses of program. The team and coach complete the benchmark assessment during a meeting by coming to a consensus on each item after group review. The BOQ is usually not taken until the PBIS team receives training in Tier 1 and is able to obtain benchmark scores of 80% on the Team Implementation Checklist (TIC; PBISApps, 2019).

Given three to four times per year (or monthly, if preferred), the Tiered Implementation Checklist (TIC) aids teams in the beginning stages of Tier 1 PBIS implementation to monitor progress and analyze growth to make sure teams are on a successful trajectory for implementation. This is done in the identical group format as the BOQ so that teams can collaborate on responses (PBISApps, 2019). The checklist contains 22 items across 10 subscales and is completed by the PBIS team members in a collaborative method. To move toward completing the BOQ that is done annually, teams must frequently earn 80% or above (Mercer et al., 2017).

Finally, Mercer et al. (2017) described the PBIS Self-Assessment Survey (SAS) (Appendix A) as an assessment consisting of 33 items that identifies the perceptions of implementation status and priority levels of improvement of fidelity by staff. All school staff members are eligible to complete this survey, with responses being averaged by the school. The assessment focuses on key areas of the school such as classroom, nonclassroom, school-wide, and individual support systems. While other assessments are limited to only the PBIS team members or coaches, it is encouraged to complete the SAS by as many teachers as possible within the school. PBIS Assessment Coordinators generate an online testing window in which educators can complete it annually online (PBISApps, 2019). Using this method for the study, it

is possible to provide data to answer Research Question 3: How does the number of years of Tier 1 implementation impact the Current Status of school-wide systems, nonclassroom settings, and classroom settings? This assessment, along with the addition of demographic questions, gave insight to the number of years PBIS Tier 1 has been implemented and led to a detailed analysis of comparison or differential data to determine whether commonalities were visible even if years of fidelity were varied.

Outside of the aforementioned assessments, school buildings must also rely on additional measures to be used in guidance toward analyzing the effectiveness of PBIS Tier 1 implementation and beyond. With the help of stakeholders, multiple measures can be utilized for data collection purposes to aid in the reflection of Tier 1 progress and growth. As reported by Upreti et al. (2010), stakeholders can consist of all individuals involved with the educational process or programs of the students, including staff, district and building administration, PBIS team, etc. The term *stakeholder utility* was defined as "The degree to which a given SWPBIS evaluation measure can serve any invested group or individual in a way that would impact that group's/individual's professional performance, investment, and time commitment" (Upreti et al., 2010, p. 499). Table 1 identifies the potential sources of PBIS data across an organization that can be collected and evaluated to in in some, or all, aspects in the implementation process. From the classroom to an organizational or state approach, specific pieces of data must be collected and analyzed by one or all parties on a continuous basis when identifying the accomplishments and challenged to the systematic implementation process.

Table 1

Potential Sources of PBIS Data

Level of assessment	Measure
Student-level	Test scores, DPR data, percent change data (behavior), rates of engagement
Classroom-level	Test scores by grade, normative engagement, class climate
School-level	PBIS implementation scores, test scores, ODRs, attendance/absence, suspensions/expulsions, Adequate Yarly Progress (AYP) scores, school climate/safety data, time-saved measures, perception data about safety, student behavior
District-level	Test scores, ODRs, attendance/absence, suspensions/expulsions, AYP, school climate/safety data, time-saved measures
State-/national-level	Implementation scores, suspensions/expulsions, AYP, attendance, school climate/safety data, state performance measures on targeted initiatives, such as students with IEPs relative to educational environment or least restrictive environment

Note. Data collected (from the school to national/state levels on different aspects of PBIS to guide in the analysis and reflection of implementation fidelity and/or progress of the program (Upreti et al., 2010).

With proper training and guidance, teams should utilize the array of documentation collected by school stakeholders to aid in the planning and reevaluation process because although some schools may already have Tier 1 currently implemented, maintaining fidelity is an ongoing process that must involve the necessary parties. Communication, collaboration, and decision-making are crucial to this process and will continue to lead to success; however, no matter the plan, model, or system, there are challenges and barriers during the entire process.

Perceived Challenges and Barriers to PBIS Implementation

The second research question asked: How does the overall perception of status levels of PBIS implementation show differences and/or similarities within several K-6 schools? In response to this question, for the specific characteristics identified as not yet in place or partially in place, the researcher could conclude these items as possible challenges and barriers to successful implementation. Implementation, or continuation of programs or intentional plans being adopted, does not come without cost of being met with difficulties (or barriers) throughout the process that would, according to Pinkelman et al. (2015), impede the sustainability of a program—in this case, PBIS. When focusing on PBIS implementation, sustaining the model is not exempt from that same pattern. To keep a program in place requires a multitude of items including proper training, resources, funding, time, communication, and support, but without those pieces, implementation within schools can become inconsistent or be discontinued over a period (Pinkelman et al., 2015). A vital and harmful barrier to the sustainability of an intervention, based upon past research, has been classified as resources being removed after implementation has already begun. For newer initiatives, it is imperative to both maintain and increase resources if needed to construct a strong foundation of success of a program. By removing such items, it takes away from the importance of PBIS, but also weakens opportunities for continuous growth and sustainability.

Another factor that hinders the upward progress of PBIS is the lack of parent engagement. Depending on school settings and demographics, it can be extremely difficult to not only have communication with parents/families, but to promote partnerships with the individuals to join in the program implementation (Pinkelman et al., 2015). For example, in some schools, families may not want to be involved with a child's education, not have working phone numbers or email addresses, or lack consistency in dedication to the program.

Logistical barriers can serve as an additional hurdle to the PBIS process with impediments occurring in example areas like time, data systems, and school climate. One of the biggest issues may constitute as schools either having the inability or lack of knowledge with tracking accurate, reliable data according to Tyre et al. (as cited in Pinkelman et al., 2015). Challenges schools can face are not having a proper data tracking system—either on paper or digitally—not equipping teachers with the proper procedures on how to collect the information, and not having the knowledge to analyze the details to establish patterns or action plans regarding behaviors. Further, schedules must be aligned to ensure proper time is allotted for implementation to take place. Meaning time must be spent during the school day teaching PBIS lessons, reviewing expectations/values, and highlighting classroom management systems. If schools do not make time to construct this permanent staple within the schedule, it can become increasingly difficult to maintain the fidelity of an implementation.

Based upon the works of Adelman and Taylor (as cited in Pinkelman et al., 2015), "Schools are confronted with multiple priorities and tasks, and implementation of a new intervention sometimes competes with already-existing requirements in the school setting" (p. 173). For example, the constant pressure and mindset of focusing schedules around ensuring instruction is being taught that is aligned with state assessment expectations is a challenge of schools nationwide along with the business of the daily school schedule. If staffing is limited, it can be difficult to have a PBIS team of staff that are not already on previous teams, resulting in a potential opportunity of adding stress to currently rigorous duties of teachers.

Without the support of administration or staff, no new or current program with continue to be implemented with fidelity. According to research by Langley et al. (as cited in Pinkelman et al., 2015), "A lack of 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" (p. 173). Further, when teachers are resistant to change or are displeased by additional "new" initiatives being brought into the school setting, staff may be less receptive to receiving the program with open arms, assuming it to be another program that will only last a few years before dwindling away. Moreover, when administration is unwilling to accept implementation, not be part of the programming process, or does not take time to learn about the features of the program, it will be challenging to maintain a PBIS model (Pinkelman et al., 2015).

From the University of Utah (2021) came a final recognized potential barrier to PBIS implementation and fidelity is an inaccurate idea or approach to a behavioral model. As addressed in above writings, the PBIS framework is a three-tiered approach with 80% of students succeeding with Tier 1 supports, 15% of students falling within the Tier 2 range, and a smaller number (about 5%) of children needing Tier 3 supports, which all forms into a shape of a pyramid or triangle. Two ineffective approaches to this model are the *hourglass* and *upside-down-triangle* models.

The hourglass model promotes all students having access and interactions to all three levels of PBIS. The documented limitations to this approach are the lack of resources to be able to sort through all students' needs, some students require more, ongoing intensive supports compared to others of less severity, and there may simply not be enough resources the increased number of individualized student interventions and reward incentives. In some schools, the mindset may be the Upside-down triangle approach, which instead of the 80%–5%–5% in Tiers 1–3, it is reversed to where 80% of the students are receiving Tier 3 supports with only 5% in the Tier 1 range. Problems with this approach, like the hourglass model, include lack of resources for individual supports and preventative strategies, and it may defeat the purpose of PBIS with Tier

1 interventions and strategies being used as measures to keep students from potentially needing assistance in the advanced tiers (University of Utah, 2021).

Summary

Chapter 2 focused on the existing literature on the research problem. The researcher analyzed, summarized, and presented key findings related to PBIS, including the definition and history of the model, historical disciplinary approaches prior to the creating of PBIS, aspects and characteristics of successful Tier 1 implementation, assessing program fidelity, and perceived challenges and barriers toward implementation fidelity of Tier 1. Although there is a multitude of research consisting of teacher perceptions on priority of importance of implementation levels across a school setting, there are limited findings comparing the same perceptions across multiple elementary settings to determine if focal points of schools compared to one another in that area even if organizations are at varying years of Tier 1 implementation. In response, the researcher located three elementary schools in the Southwestern Pennsylvania region to focus on utilizing a mixed-methods research design. By obtaining 20 participants across the three schools, the researcher gathered vital evidence that could potentially close that gap in the world of research.

Chapter 3 includes a presentation of the methodology of the study. The content reflects the research design, research approach, instrumentation, participants, setting, validity, and reliability. Later in the chapter, the researcher elaborates upon the site permission and selection process, data collection and analysis procedures, ethical considerations, and potential limitations.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Description of Research

In this chapter, the researcher details the methodology used in this study, which was conducted within three local schools that serve students from kindergarten to sixth grade. The purpose of this study was to analyze the fidelity of implementation levels of Tier 1 PBIS, as a strong foundation of PBIS is key to making advancements toward the secondary and tertiary tiers along with an overall successful school-wide system. More specifically, the researcher analyzed the current status of Tier 1 within three key areas: school-wide discipline systems, nonclassroom management systems, classroom management systems, and consequently determined whether years of implementation play an important or lesser role in each of those subgroups. The research questions aided in determining opportunities of similarities, the statues, and perceptions of priority for Tier 1 across multiple school settings with varying years of implementation.

Research Questions

1. What are the main factors contributing to a successful implementation at the Tier 1 level of PBIS?
2. Does the overall perspective of status of PBIS implementation show differences and/or similarities within several K-6 schools?
3. Does the number years of Tier 1 implementation impact the current status of school-wide systems, nonclassroom settings, and classroom settings in each the three identified support systems?

Research Approach

A mixed-methods research design that combined qualitative and quantitative approaches was used to examine the similarities and perceptions on present status of Tier 1 implementation in the areas of schoolwide systems, classroom, and nonclassroom settings where PBIS may or

may not have been currently established in the K-6 school settings. Babbie (as cited in USCLibraries, 2021) described quantitative methods as "emphasize objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires, surveys, or by manipulating pre-existing statistical data using computational techniques"). Further, Roberts and Hyatt (2019) elaborated that quantitative research must begin with a detailed plan of a set of questions or hypotheses. These approaches both involve control over the research setting and the manipulation of variables.

Qualitative research, although similar in some ways to the quantitative approach, places more emphasis on the collection, analysis, and interpretations of nonnumerical data such as language or text; such data can be collected via audio recordings, interviews, or even videos (McLeod, 2019). Continuing, Creswell and Creswell (2018) elaborated further on this type of research, mentioning, "these are all open-ended forms of data in which the participants share their ideas freely, not constrained by predetermined scales or instruments. Then the researchers review the data, make sense of it, and organize it into codes and themes that cut across all the data sources," (p. 181). For this study, the participants completed three open-ended questions at the end of the survey in hopes of obtaining more detailed and elaborate responses aligned with the survey and research questions from the participants.

By having both types of design methods in place, the researcher used a mixed-methods approach to sift through the information to combine the different perspectives of the data to aid in the collection, analysis, and explanation processes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This combination of information increased the chances of gathering more accurate information to lead to potentially finding solutions to the problem. More specifically, the researcher utilized the convergent mixed-methods design, where quantitative and qualitative data were collected and

analyzed separately, followed by a comparison of both to determine whether patterns existed that align with the current problem using the same variables that focused on the status of PBIS Tier 1 implementation fidelity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The current research incorporated a survey design. Creswell and Creswell (2018) elucidated that such a design "provides a quantitative description of trends, attitudes, and opinions of a population, or tests for associations among variables of a population" (p. 147). Survey designs aid researchers in answering questions in which are descriptive, center on the relationships between variables, and concern predictive relationships between variables over a certain amount of time. The primary purpose of this research was to answer the questions stated above to determine whether—depending on the number of years of Tier 1 implementation—schools have similar or different approaches and viewpoints on what is necessary to begin the PBIS model in one's educational environment and the priority levels of those factors.

The Wilcoxon signed-rank test was employed in this study to compare two independent samples, related samples, or matched samples to aid in determining whether the populations' mean ranks differ (Yinglin, 2020) using data composed of definite scores (Scheff, 2016). Finally, a Likert scale was used in this study to gather feedback from participants by counting the frequency of occurrence within each category (Cullen et al., 2010). This test was chosen over others due to the comparative nature of the study. With the focus on three elementary schools, it was crucial to give the same survey to all teachers and then identify similarities or differences of the responses to aid in generating possible recommendations or future considerations for improvement in Tier 1 implementation.

Instrumentation

Teachers' perceptions and preparation within the ground-level work of PBIS can lay the foundation for the program's success in future years. Having a concrete understanding of what is

needed (e.g., materials, resources, training, time, continuous program evaluation) guides schools to finding achievements, specifically at the Tier 1 level. When the initial tier is in place, it is crucial for school and teams to evaluate the progress to lend in finding both areas of strengths and growths to ensure that ongoing data-driven decisions are made to improve the program. While there are multiple assessments that can be used to monitor the performance of PBIS, one is geared toward promoting and sustaining improvement of implementation: the Self-Assessment Survey (SAS).

The SAS, according to PBISApps (2019), is "an annual multiple-response survey identifying staff perception of the implementation status and improvement priority for school-wide, classroom, non-classroom and individual support systems" (p. 15). This survey (see Appendix A) is given to all educators within a school and directs to have it completed by as many individuals possible, the administrator, or PBIS Assessment Coordinator. The SAS can be completed electronically for more immediate results (i.e., results can be generated within 24 hours), with respondents scoring closed-ended statements in four areas consisting of *school-wide* (SW), *nonclassroom settings* (NCSS), *classroom systems* (CS), and *individual student systems* (ISS; PBISApps, 2019). According to Sugai et al. (as cited in Solomon et al., 2015), the SAS is a 46-question survey along with defining each system into operational formats: *school-wide systems* pertain to the entire population and settings; *nonclassroom setting systems* can be defined as the times or places in which behavior monitoring and supervision would be strongly emphasized such as in the hallways, bus, playground, and cafeteria; *classroom systems* are the instructional settings where educators provide learning opportunities and supervise students; and *individual student systems* are those strategies or supports provided to students who display chronic behavior problems. The items within the systems are categorized and rated based upon a

3-point subscale (0 = *not in place*, 1 = *partially in place*, 2 = *in place*). On the other side of each system, the surveyed teacher found a 2-point subscale aligned with priority levels for improvement correlated with each of the systems as well (0 = *low*, 1 = *medium*, 2 = *high*; PBISApps*,* 2019). While the implementation status section was on the simpler side of completion for the educator, these authors provided clarity by highlighting that this section "should be determined based on whether a respondent perceives the item to be a priority for the school to work on improving, [and] is not a determination of whether the respondent perceives the item to be a valuable component of PBIS" (p. 16).

Additionally, there are three reports in which can be generated from the SAS results: total score, subscale, and items. Total score offers the status and improvement priority for given areas. The purpose of the survey guided school teams through a phased process of first summarizing and then analyzing the results along with prioritizing the biggest areas of need. Based on the information found within a document from the Colorado Department of Education (2021), the total score report provided the reviewer the percentage of teachers based upon individualized perceptions of status and implementation priorities. The subscale report "provides an average response to the seven subscale elements of school-wide system and an overall school-wide system implementation average [with] no subscale reports for the other three scales of the SAS" (Colorado Department of Education, 2021, p. 2). Finally, the forementioned training document particularizes on the items report, mentioning that it generates a percentage from respondents' scores in the areas of implementation levels and priority considerations that can be coded by color based on the percentage of those who found items to be fully in place (Red = *50% or fewer*, Yellow = *>50% but less than 80%*, No color = *80% or more*). For this research, based upon the

number of participants in the study, the SAS total score report was utilized to analyze the results of the selected school buildings.

Continuing, the SAS tool (Appendix A) provided participants with the opportunity to utilize a Likert scale in providing a range of questions for individuals to choose from based on one's levels of attitude toward the given questions. Named after American social scientist Rensis Likert, Likert scales provide some of the most reliable measurement methods of opinions, perceptions, and behaviors (Survey Monkey, 2021). In a typical Likert scale, participants may find a 5- or 7-point scale that ranges in response options from one extreme attitude to the other, such as *extremely dissatisfied* to *extremely satisfied*, or *always*, *often*, and *sometimes* (Sullivan & Artino, 2013). In this instance, the SAS survey gave teachers chances to be scored on 33 items using a 0–3 scoring scale among two subscales (PBISApps, 2019). Each response on the scale corresponds with a numerical value, which is how the responses are measured. Because of the reliability in measuring perceptions, the SAS was chosen that entailed the Likert scale.

Validity

According to Hagan-Burke et al. and Safran (as cited in McIntosh et al., 2017), "the SAS has high internal consistency and correlations with other validated SWPBIS fidelity," and for all tiers, the internal consistency is high (p. 9). While there appears to be evidence for validity at the content level, Solomon et al. (2015) stated that there is no published literature backing its construct validity. In the same article, the authors defined construct validity as "whether what is being measured accurately reflects the domains purported to be measured" (p. 178). Even though there are unclear findings on the number of participants and issues within a past study, Horner et al. (2004) explained there was a strong correlation between SAS and School-Wide Survey (SWS) scores to the School-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET). Previous researchers have shown the

SAS instrument to be a valid measure to analyze perceptions of PBIS fidelity (Solomon et al., 2015).

Reliability

Through extensive investigation of current and past research of the SAS tool being utilized to measure perceptions of PBIS implementation, there appeared to be no published works documenting its reliability. Therefore, future studies should be taken into consideration that may focus on the trustworthiness of the survey within schools.

Participants and Setting

The sample from this study was selected from a population of educators (general and special) from one lower elementary school (K-3), one intermediate (4-6), and another which included all K-6 students; all three buildings were classified as Title 1 schools. Information detailing the characteristics of the students and teacher populations of the schools can be found in Table 2.

Table 2

Elementary School Student and Teacher Characteristics as Percentages of Samples

Characteristics	School I (K-3)	School II (4-6)	School 3 (K-6)
Student population			
Economically disadvantaged	98.6	88.8	53.5
Special education	14.3	28.1	24.1
Homeless	7.3	7.4	2.6
Gender of students			
Male	51.7	47.6	49.9
Female	48.3	52.4	50.1
Race/ethnic background (students)			
White	22.2	24.6	64
Black	59.2	58.8	14.6
2 or mixed races	15.9	15	14.2
Hispanic	2.7	1.6	3.1
Gender of teachers			
Male	5	30	34
Female	95	70	66
Race/ethnic background (teachers)			
White	100	96	87
Black	0	4	13

Note. Census data are of three elementary schools located within the southwestern Pennsylvania region.

Participants were chosen through simple random sampling, with volunteers responding to an email sent to the entire staff of educators to determine willingness of participation. According to Tracy (2013), random sampling is defined as "every member of a group [having] an equal opportunity to be selected" (p. 134). With simple random sampling, the desired number of participants was 20, and the researcher randomly selected an equal number of teachers from each building until that desired sample size was achieved (Tracy, 2013). In this case, all general and special education teachers were given the chance to volunteer to be part of the study. Along with

this email, a summary of the research that explained the guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality to all who took part in the study was attached. Additionally, prior to the survey being provided to the teachers, both superintendents signed off on approval for the collection of teacher information through the survey.

Site Permission and Selection

Participating sites were purposely chosen knowing each were at varying levels of PBIS Tier 1 implementation, so it was important to the researcher to determine whether differing years of implementation played critical roles in teacher perceptions of status and priority levels of implementation. The lower elementary school is in its third year of PBIS implementation, while the upper elementary is in the fifth year. The K-6 location has had stages of PBIS occurring in the past; however, due to COVID-19 and turnover in administration, the elementary school has not had a sound program in place. The 2021–2022 school year will see the PBIS model resurfacing under new leadership. Two of the schools (the lower and upper elementary) are in the same district as one another. The remaining K-6 school is in a different district about 20 minutes away.

Permission was granted by the superintendents after providing the leaders with proper materials, verification of IRB approval (Appendix B), and a written letter describing the potential research that needed to be conducted, who would be eligible to participate, and the timeframe in which it would take place. Once approved, the researcher contacted the building principals to inform the administrators of the rationale behind the research study. From there, staff emails were sent with all necessary documentation, with the hopes of recruiting about six participants per building.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher obtained permission to conduct research from two district superintendents. Next, to conduct this research, permission to do so was gained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Slippery Rock University via the IRB application and supporting documentation submission along with a successful approval process. Email lists were received from the superintendents on whom to contact to potentially participate, and consent forms were sent to the teachers. After volunteers were identified, the survey link and explanation of completion were sent to the individuals, but the personal identifiers of the participants always remained confidential. If a participant was unsure of a how to respond to a closed-ended question, there was an option to leave an item left unanswered.

The Self-Assessment Survey (SAS) was digitally manufactured and sent to participants via Google Forms to ensure for accurate and quick data collection. The instrument was distributed to 20 participants across three buildings, and all individuals consented to complete the questionnaire. Questions' scaled response options were taken directly from the paper copy of the SAS tool to ensure accuracy of information delivered from the PBIS assessment. Due to the focus of the research, the SAS was amended to only focus on the current status of the school-wide systems, nonclassroom settings systems, and classroom systems. The priority for improvement of each of the three features was not needed for this study, but may be used in future comparison considerations. With the elimination of the final featured section, individual student systems, the questions were condensed from 46 to 38 closed-ended questions and two open-ended response questions.

Demographic questions such as name of school, and position of participant were originally on the survey, but others such as gender were added. Further, a question regarding years of PBIS Tier 1 implementation was added as well. This was given to special and general

education teachers from the three buildings who had volunteered to take part in the study. Access to the survey was sent via email along with directions on how to complete it. The timeframe for this survey was roughly 4 weeks in length, and two follow-up email notices were sent to participants during the second and fourth weeks of the timeline. After 1 month, the survey window closed and the responses were collected and analyzed quantitatively.

Ethical Considerations and Limitations

When speaking of limitations, all school names, teacher names, and additional district information were not named within this study. Specific limitations to the study included the possibility of further interpretations of the data collected from participants. In addition, the study was limited due to the online administration of the survey rather than in-person, where participants may ask immediate questions if confused on a certain area of the survey. This confusion could have led to inaccurate scoring within a behavioral system. The survey was administered to teachers who volunteered to participate, so there was a mix of educators with differing classroom focus areas such as special education or general education backgrounds. This survey was conducted the year following a national pandemic, and in the prior school year, many focus areas of school districts—like PBIS—may not have been a top priority to school staff, especially if students were in a remote setting and not displaying negative behaviors, leading to possible affects toward the study, with schools perhaps needing to shift back to emphasizing the program's vitality with the majority—or all—students returning in-person during the 2021–2022 academic year.

Further, the invitation of survey participation was only extended to general and special educators in the buildings. Therefore, a consideration for future studies would be to extend the opportunities to all educators and administrators in the school—not only to gain more information from an increased number of participants, but to allow additional members of the

building to provide feedback on the PBIS model because all members of the building are important to the success of Tier 1 implementation fidelity. An additional consideration would be to conduct an in-person interview with the survey questions compared to a digital format on Google Forms, which would provide opportunities toward expanding on questions and gain more insight from the participants that would strengthen the research findings even more. With the survey and open-ended responses only identifying perceptions of current status of PBIS Tier 1 implementation with the focus areas, it may be recommended for future research to have the entire SAS completed by participants, including priorities for improvement, to gain a more accurate picture of the behavioral management system across the three buildings. This would allow the usage of the reports from SAS to increase the accuracy of results.

Data Analysis Procedures

Due to participants only being asked to share information on the current status of features of Tier 1 and not needing to answer questions regarding priority levels for improvement of each, the researcher provided the teachers with an amended version of the SAS survey that was digitally manufactured on Google Forms. This consisted of only 38 of the original 46 questions. In addition, the participants provided two open-ended responses. The survey results of the closed-ended questions were generated through the Google Forms platform, and the SAS reports were not needed for this study. This allowed for the Wilcoxon signed-ranks test to be utilized in the comparison of quantitative results from the three sample schools. This highlighted potential patterns between all three buildings and aided with the development of themes and future considerations surrounding the existing problem. The open-ended responses were then read and re-read to enhance accuracy in processing the information and assist the researcher in identifying common perceptions and correlations to the closed-ended questioning portion of the survey

(Tracy, 2013). The researcher requested further assistance from the dissertation committee to partner in the data review process to ensure accurate interpretations were taking place.

Summary

In Chapter 3, the emphasis was placed on the study's methodology, entailing topics such as the purpose, rationale, and type of research, the research approach, questions to answer throughout and after the study was completed, instrumentation, validity, reliability, participants and settings, site permission and selection, considerations and limitations, and data analysis technique. The researcher conducted mixed-methods study using an online survey of items (36 closed-ended questions and two written response questions) lasting between 20–30 minutes in length for completion. The researcher outlined considerations related to the study's validity, reliability, and limitations to improve the quality of the findings. In Chapter 4, the results of the data analysis are presented in detail.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to analyze the fidelity of implementation levels of Tier 1 PBIS, as a strong foundation of PBIS is key to making advancements toward the secondary and tertiary tiers along with an overall successful school-wide system. More specifically, the researcher analyzed the current status of Tier 1 within three key areas—school-wide discipline systems, nonclassroom management systems, classroom management systems—and consequently determined whether years of implementation play an important or lesser role in each of those subgroups.

The sample from this study was selected from a population of educators (general and special) from one lower elementary school (K-3), one intermediate (4-6), and another which included all K-6 students; all three buildings were classified as Title 1 schools. Educators were asked to electronically complete the Self-Assessment Survey (SAS) to measure the study variables. A total of 17 educators across the three Title I schools participated in the study. Quantitative data were analyzed using Kruskal Wallis H-Tests. Content analysis was conducted to examine the qualitative data. Meanwhile, the respondents' qualitative responses were analyzed using the thematic analysis method. This chapter consists of four sections: (a) a descriptive analysis of the sample; (b) the data analysis procedures that were conducted; (c) the results of the quantitative and qualitative data analysis; and (d) a summary of the key findings.

Quantitative Results

Demographics

In this study, the researcher collected four demographical information about the participants: job category, school name, years of being an educator, and years that the Tier 1 level of PBIS was implemented. The names of the schools were anonymized to protect the

privacy and confidentiality of the participants. Table 3 presents the frequency and percentage of the demographical information of the participants. The majority of the participants were educators under General Education (*n* = 10, 58.8%). Most of the participants are currently employed at Lower Elementary (*n* = 7, 41.2%), a lower elementary school. Many participants have been educators for 16 or more years (*n* = 5, 29.4%), followed by those who have been educators for 3 years (*n* = 4, 23.5%). Lastly, most of the participants came from a school where Tier 1 level of PBIS has been implemented for 3–4 years (*n* = 7, 41.2%).

Table 3

Frequency and Percentage of Demographical Information (N = 17)

Demographics	*n*	%
Job category		
General education	10	58.8
Special education	7	41.2
School name		
K-6 Elementary	5	29.4
Lower Elementary	7	41.2
Intermediate Elementary	5	29.4
Years as educator		
1 year	1	5.9
3 years	4	23.5
4 years	1	5.9
5 years	2	11.8
6-10 years	2	11.8
11-15 years	2	11.8
16 or more years	5	29.4
Years Tier 1 level of PBIS implementation		
1-2 years	5	29.4
3-4 years	7	41.2
5 or more years	5	29.4

Tables 4 through 7 present the descriptive statistics (minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation) of the study variables measured through SAS for each school. Scores for school-wide discipline systems can range from 0.00 to 36.00, where a higher score means that more elements of PBIS' school-wide discipline systems are in place. Scores for nonclassroom management systems can range from 0.00 to 18.00, where a higher score means that more of the elements of PBIS' nonclassroom management systems are in place. Lastly, scores for classroom management systems can range from 0.00 to 22.00, where a higher score means that more of the elements of PBIS' classroom management systems are in place.

For K-6 Elementary School, the average score for school-wide discipline systems was 19.20 (*SD* = 1.10), indicating that participants perceived that the elements of PBIS' school-wide discipline systems are partially in place. The average score for nonclassroom management systems was 11.40 (*SD* = 3.13), which indicates that participants perceived that the elements of PBIS' nonclassroom management systems are partially in place at this school. Lastly, the average score for classroom management systems was 16.20 (*SD* = 0.48), which indicates that participants perceived that the elements of PBIS' nonclassroom management systems are partially in place at the school.

Table 4

Minimum, Maximum, Mean, and Standard Deviation of Study Variables for K-6 Elementary

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
School-wide discipline systems	5	18.00	20.00	19.20	1.10
Nonclassroom management systems	5	8.00	14.00	11.40	3.13
Classroom management systems	5	16.00	17.00	16.20	0.48

For Lower Elementary, the average score for school-wide discipline systems was 29.29 (*SD* = 5.94), which indicates that participants perceived that the elements of PBIS' school-wide

discipline systems are mostly in place at this school. The average score for nonclassroom management systems was 13.57 (*SD* = 3.26), which indicates that participants perceived that the elements of PBIS' nonclassroom management systems are primarily in place. Lastly, the average score for classroom management systems was 16.57 (*SD* = 3.60), which indicates that participants perceived that the elements of PBIS' nonclassroom management systems are partially in place in the school.

Table 5

Minimum, Maximum, Mean, and Standard Deviation of Study Variables for Lower Elementary

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
School-wide discipline systems	7	21.00	36.00	29.29	5.94
Nonclassroom management systems	7	9.00	18.00	13.57	3.26
Classroom management systems	7	13.00	21.00	16.57	3.60

For Intermediate Elementary, the average score was 32.00 (*SD* = 4.00) for school-wide discipline systems, 14.60 (*SD* = 4.22) for nonclassroom management systems, and 17.80 (*SD* = 3.70) for classroom management systems. These scores indicate that the participants perceived that elements of PBIS' school-wide discipline systems, nonclassroom management systems, and classroom management systems are mostly in place in the school.

Table 6

Minimum, Maximum, Mean, and Standard Deviation of Study Variables for Intermediate Elementary

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
School-wide discipline systems	5	28.00	36.00	32.00	4.00
Nonclassroom management systems	5	8.00	18.00	14.60	4.22
Classroom management systems	5	12.00	21.00	17.80	3.70

Quantitative Analysis

The SAS was administered to measure all the study variables. The participants' survey responses were exported into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet from the electronic surveys submitted by the participants. A total of 17 participants completed the electronic survey. Specifically, there were five participants from the K-6 school (K-6 Elementary), five participants from the intermediate school (Intermediate Elementary), and seven participants from the lower elementary school (Lower Elementary).

The researcher coded the survey responses from SAS into a numerical scale. The SAS uses a 3-point Likert scale, in which 0 = *Not in place*, 1 = *Partially in place*, and 2 = *In place*. The school-wide discipline systems section has 18 items; therefore, the scores could range from 0 to 36. The nonclassroom management systems section has nine items; therefore, the scores could range from 0 to 18. Lastly, the classroom management systems section has nine items, meaning that scores could range from 0 to 22. For all three variables, a higher score indicates that the PBIS elements are in place/visible/implemented in the school.

After all surveys were recorded, the data were then imported to SPSS for data analysis. Before any data analysis was conducted, assumptions for Kruskal Wallis H-Test were tested first. The following section reflects the results of the assumptions testing.

Assumptions Testing. The use of the Mann-Whitney U-Test requires data to meet several assumptions. These assumptions are as follows: (a) the dependent variable should be measured at the continuous level, (b) the independent variable should consist of two categorical groups, and (c) independence of observations. Each of these assumptions was tested before conducting the regression analysis..

Assumption 1: Dependent Variable Measured at the Continuous Level. There were three dependent variables in this study: school-wide discipline systems, nonclassroom

management systems, and classroom management systems. As discussed previously, the SAS uses a Likert-type scale to rate the survey items. A 3-point Likert-type scale was used to numerically code the responses (0 = *Not in place*, 1 = *Partially in place*, 2 = *In place)*. Consequently, the study's dependent variables were measured using a Likert scale, which produces ordinal variables that can be treated as continuous under some conditions. Specifically, the dependent variable scores were obtained by taking the average of the numerical ratings related to the dependent variable. Therefore, the assumption that the dependent variable should be measured at a continuous level was met.

Assumption 2: Independent Variables Should Consist of Two or More Categorical Groups. This study's independent variable was the type of school. The type of school was operationalized into three categories – K-6 school (K-6 Elementary), five participants from an intermediate school (Intermediate Elementary), and five participants from a lower elementary (Lower Elementary). Therefore, the assumption that the independent variable should consist of categorical groups was met.

Assumption 3: Independence of Observations. Participants independently decided to participate and were randomly chosen to answer the survey on their own. Each participant was given an electronic survey that they went to and had to answer the survey items independently without any coaching or bias from other participants. Participants were instructed not to communicate with each other. Due to these steps, it is safe to conclude that the assumption of independent observations was met.

All hypotheses were tested using the Kruskal Wallis H-Test. SPSS was used to conduct this test. A significance level of 95% was used in the test to identify any significant differences in the dependent variables' mean ranks across the independent variable groupings. The purpose

of the following quantitative analysis is related to RQ2, which is to examine whether there were differences in the overall perspective of the status of PBIS implementation across school types. A summary of the results is presented in the succeeding subsections.

Quantitative Findings

School-Wide Discipline Systems

The dependent variable was the school-wide discipline systems, and the independent variable was the school type. The results of using the Kruskal Wallis H-Test are presented in Table 7. The results of this test showed a statistically significant difference in the perceived status of the school-wide discipline systems among schools ($\chi^2(2) = 10.56$, $p = 0.005$). There was a mean rank school-wide discipline systems score of 10.79 for lower elementary school (Lower Elementary), 12.50 for intermediate school (Intermediate Elementary), and 3.00 for K-6 school (K-6 Elementary). This indicates that participants from the intermediate school perceived that the implementation of school-wide discipline systems in their school was more prevalent, visible, or successful than the other two schools.

Table 7

Kruskal Wallis H-Test for School-Wide Discipline Systems

School Type	*N*	Mean Rank	Kruskal-Wallis H	df	Sig.
Lower Elementary	7	10.79	10.56	2	.005
Intermediate	5	12.50			
K-6	5	3.00			

Nonclassroom Management Systems

The dependent variable was the nonclassroom management systems, and the independent variable was the school type. The results of using the Kruskal Wallis H-Test are presented in Table 8. The results of this test showed that there was no statistically significant difference in the

perceived status of the nonclassroom management systems among schools ($\chi^2(2) = 2.59$, $p = 0.274$). This indicates that the participants' perceived implementation of nonclassroom management systems in their respective schools was almost similar. The implementation of nonclassroom management systems in three schools was mostly in place.

Table 8

Kruskal Wallis H-Test for Nonclassroom Management Systems

School Type	*N*	Mean Rank	Kruskal-Wallis H	df	Sig.
Lower Elementary	7	9.64	2.59	2	0.274
Intermediate	5	11.00			
K-6	5	6.10			

Classroom Management Systems

The dependent variable was the nonclassroom management systems, and the independent variable was the school type. The results of using the Kruskal Wallis H-Test are presented in Table 9. The results of this test showed that there was no statistically significant difference in the perceived status of the classroom management systems among schools ($\chi^2(2) = 1.25$, $p = 0.535$). This indicates that the participants' perceived implementation of classroom management systems in their respective schools was almost similar, and the implementation of nonclassroom management systems in three schools was mostly in place.

Table 9

Kruskal Wallis H-Test for Classroom Management Systems

School Type	*N*	Mean Rank	Kruskal-Wallis H	df	Sig.
Lower Elementary	7	8.14	1.25	2	0.535
Intermediate	5	11.10			
K-6	5	8.10			

Qualitative Results

The second component of the research was the qualitative analysis of the open-ended questions and answers of the respondents. The researcher formed three thematic categories to fully describe the phenomenon and maximize the respondents' responses. From the thematic analysis of the qualitative answers of the respondents, the researcher uncovered 23 themes addressing the first research question of the study. It must be noted that the researcher also took into consideration the hierarchy of themes to better present the shared perceptions of the respondents. The major themes of the study are the most significant themes with the greatest number of references from the respondents. Meanwhile, the minor themes of the study were the other important themes, which received fewer references than the major themes. Lastly, subthemes were also incorporated as detailed examples of the parent themes or the major and minor themes. Table 10 contains the complete themes under the qualitative component of the research.

Table 10

Complete Breakdown of the Study Themes

Thematic Category	Number of Major Themes	Number of Minor Themes	Number of Subthemes	Total Number of Themes
TC1. Main characteristics needed for a successful implementation at the Tier 1 level of PBIS	2	6	1	9
TC2. Proven successful strategies already in place	2	5	1	8
TC3. Areas for improvement for the successful implementation at the Tier 1 level of PBIS	1	5	0	6
Total	5	16	2	23

The qualitative research question asked: What are the main factors contributing to a successful implementation at the Tier 1 level of PBIS? The results revealed that the main characteristics needed for a successful implementation at the Tier 1 level of PBIS were: encouraging buy-in from stakeholders and needing the use of consistent language, communication, and policies across the school. Meanwhile, when asked about the proven successful strategies that are already in place, a majority of the respondents reported the value of informing and reminding the students about the expectations on a daily basis and integrating the teaching of values inside and outside the classroom. Finally, respondents recommended the need to implement constant and clear communication to all stakeholders for the successful

implementation at the Tier 1 level of PBIS. Table 11 contains the complete display of themes generated from the analysis.

Table 11

Complete Breakdown of the Study Themes

Thematic Category	Themes	Subthemes	Number of References	Percentage of References
TC1. Main characteristics needed for a successful implementation at the Tier 1 level of PBIS	Encouraging buy-in from stakeholders		6	35%
	Needing the use of consistent language, communication, and policies across the school		6	35%
	Needing to reteach the expectations of teachers to their students		3	18%
	Needing formal and consistent consequences		2	12%
	Needing training and development programs to improve the competence of staff members		2	12%
	Needing consistent support from the administration or management	Provision of adequate resources	2	12%
	Needing to form a diverse and competent team to manage the program		1	6%

	Needing early intervention strategies to manage the behaviors of students		1	6%
TC2. Proven successful strategies already in place	Informing and reminding the students about the expectations on a daily basis		5	29%
	Integrating the teaching of values inside and outside the classroom		5	29%
	Implementing a rewards system for motivation		3	18%
	Having buy-in from staff members		2	12%
	Practicing clear and common communication across the school		2	12%
	Having effective and proactive management	Provision of adequate resources	1	6%
	Displaying positive and encouraging attitude from staff members		1	6%
TC3. Areas for improvement for the successful implementation at the Tier 1 level of PBIS	Needing to implement constant and clear communication to all stakeholders		6	35%
	Needing to implement consistent negative consequences		4	24%
	Emphasizing the positive traits and		3	18%

behaviors of the students		
Focusing on nonclassroom areas	2	12%
Needing complete support and buy-in from staff members	2	12%
Highlighting behavior expectations from students	1	6%

Thematic Category 1: Main Characteristics Needed for a Successful Implementation at the Tier 1 Level of PBIS

The first thematic category of the study discussed the main characteristics needed for a successful implementation at the Tier 1 Level of PBIS. Through the thematic analysis of the qualitative responses, the researcher uncovered that there must be buy-in from stakeholders and emphasis on the use of consistent language, communication, and policies across the school. Six other minor themes emerged but with limited references. These themes may need further research to solidify their trustworthiness. Table 12 contains the breakdown of the themes in response to the first thematic category of the qualitative component of the research.

Table 12

Themes Addressing Thematic Category 1

Thematic Category	Themes	Subthemes	Number of References	Percentage of References
TC1. Main characteristics needed for a successful implementation at the Tier 1 level of PBIS	Encouraging buy-in from stakeholders		6	35%
	Needing the use of consistent language, communication, and policies across the school		6	35%
	Needing to reteach the expectations of teachers to their students		3	18%
	Needing formal and consistent consequences		2	12%
	Needing training and development programs to improve the competence of staff members		2	12%
	Needing consistent support from the administration or management	Provision of adequate resources	2	12%
	Needing to form a diverse and competent team to manage the program		1	6%
	Needing early intervention		1	6%

	strategies to manage the behaviors of students

Major Theme 1: Encouraging Buy-In From Stakeholders. The first major theme of the study was the characteristic of the presence of buy-in from the stakeholders. According to six of the 17 respondents of the study, it is crucial to gain all the stakeholders' support and acceptance, such as the leaders, teachers, staff members, students, and their parents. Respondent 2 stated that there is a multitude of factors that are necessary in order to achieve and maintain the successful implementation of Tier 1 PBIS. This respondent shared the following comment in the survey:

> I think a few things are necessary to maintain high levels of implementation of Tier 1 PBIS. Some factors include proper, consistent training, staff buy-in. Training needs to be clear for staff to understand how to identify problem behaviors and address those restoratively. Staff needs to feel administrative support on behaviors being addressed.

Respondent 5 added how staff buy-in must be present in order to properly implement the plans and goals of the program. With their buy-in, there could be reinforcements and reminders for the students:

> We also need staff buy-in, but to do that, the staff needs to feel like there are clear and explicit consequences for problem behaviors. The negatives will always outweigh the positives if they aren't being addressed/handled consistently and effectively. That is something we have not yet gotten to since our focus has been on just implementing the positive reinforcement and teaching/reteaching of expectations school-wide.

Further, Respondent 9 touched on the need for parents to be involved in the process as well. This respondent called for the parents' understanding and cooperation to address the issues of their children, stating,

> I believe our biggest problem is not involving parents in the process when problem behaviors are consistently happening. Parents should have to come to school and meet with the team to become part of the solution. When parents don't have buy-in, all of our efforts are for nothing.

According to Respondent 13, all staff members must be committed to participating and implementing the program. This respondent indicated, "I think the main factor needed to implement a strong, consistent Tier 1 level of PBIS is to have all staff participate with fidelity." Lastly, Respondent 14 echoed that "All staff needs to be on board and be consistent with verbiage."

Major Theme 2: Needing the Use of Consistent Language, Communication, and Policies Across the School. The second major theme of the study was the need for consistency in terms of the language used and the communication. Another six respondents emphasized the value of common and consistent language and processes across their institution. Respondent 6 stated that there must be "Consistent language and implementation." Further, Respondent 7 called identified from experience that "Consistency with all faculty is number 1. Students get familiar with expectations and carry them on to the next grade level. Also, the teacher has to reaffirm behaviors and rules consistently with all students and provide daily feedback."

Furthermore, Respondent 11 echoed the need for "Consistency in consequences and clear communication." Respondent 12 shared the effectiveness of having a "Common language across all environments, consistency among rewards and consequences and regular training for teachers

and staff." Respondent 14 stated, "All staff needs to be on board and be consistent with verbiage." Finally, Respondent 15 also highlighted during the survey that there must be "Consistency, consistency, consistency. Also, effective communication with stakeholders (primarily families) goes a long way. Positive phone calls are pivotal to bolster parental support."

Thematic Category 2: Proven Successful Strategies Already in Place

The second thematic category discussed the proven and successful strategies already in place based on the perceptions and experiences of the respondents. According to the five of the participants, the following have been proven to be effective: informing and reminding the students about the expectations on a daily basis and integrating the teaching of values inside and outside the classroom. Five respondents respectively shared the two major themes of the second thematic category. Meanwhile, the minor themes of implementing a rewards system for motivation; having buy-in from staff members; practicing clear and common communication across the school; having effective and proactive management; and displaying positive and encouraging attitude from staff members received limited references and maty need further research to improve their trustworthiness. Table 13 contains the breakdown of the themes in response to the second thematic category of the qualitative component of the research.

Table 13

Themes Addressing Thematic Category 2

Thematic Category	Themes	Subthemes	Number of References	Percentage of References
TC2. Proven successful strategies already in place	Informing and reminding the students about the expectations on a daily basis		5	29%
	Integrating the teaching of values inside and outside the classroom		5	29%
	Implementing a rewards system for motivation		3	18%
	Having buy-in from staff members		2	12%
	Practicing clear and common communication across the school		2	12%
	Having effective and proactive management	Provision of adequate resources	1	6%
	Displaying positive and encouraging attitude from staff members		1	6%

Major Theme 3: Informing and Reminding the Students about the Expectations on a Daily Basis. The third major theme of the qualitative component discussed the effectiveness of constantly keeping the students aware of the school's and their teachers' expectations. According to five of the 17 respondents, expectations must be clear and relayed to the students constantly. Respondent 1 stated that the school expectations must be presented to the students and that the

students must actively learn and embody them: "Our school-wide expectations are clear, stated every day by all students multiple times a day. Expectations are clear for positive examples of the five school-wide expectations." Similarly, Respondent 3 echoed, “Our school-wide expectations are mostly clear, stated every day by all students, and positive examples are used for reinforcement.” For Respondent 9, expectations must always be relayed and highlighted both inside and outside the classroom:

> The classroom setting is the biggest strength. I say this because the self-contained classroom with as few transitions as possible doesn't give the students the opportunity to become off task or engage in problem behaviors. I work very hard to set the classroom expectations up, and I hold them to those high standards. I can control what is happening in my own room.

According to Respondent 15, the “PBIS rewards system is reinforced via morning announcements. This visibly increases student motivation to make good choices.” Finally, Respondent 17 also stated that the "School-wide positive expectations and behaviors are defined and taught."

Major Theme 4: Integrating the teaching of Values Inside and Outside the Classroom. The fourth major theme that followed was the incorporation of values inside and outside the classroom. According to the five participants, this must be practiced to ensure that the students are aware of the proper values and characteristics; and, again, the teachers' expectations. Respondent 5 explained that the teachers must be commended for the success of the program thus far. The constant reinforcement both inside and outside the classroom has also helped immensely:

> I think the staff has done a great job at teaching the rolling out of the program to all the students. It really has made a difference in a majority of the students having a concrete reward for working (filling the classroom and school-wide bins). It's been a great reinforcer having tickets to hand out that serve a purpose, and the staff, for the most part, has a high level of enthusiasm at explicitly stating why the students receive those tickets daily.

As for Respondent 11, this practice of "In-classroom and nonclassroom teaching moments of how to act in those settings" has been effective based on experience. Respondent 12 added that instructions from teachers help in building the characters of the student:

> The direct instruction of skills and character values is the biggest strength of the implementation of the PBIS program. The children identify with the characters and show a sense of pride when they are able to model and verbalize character traits.

Respondent 13 also shared, "From my experience, I feel that both nonclassroom and classroom settings are equally as strong in Tier 1 implementation. I feel this way because staff participate and are consistent with the PBIS program in both areas." Lastly, Respondent 14 commented, "In my experience, the nonclassroom and classroom settings are equal. When teachers are consistent with reinforcement of the PBIS program, it is effective in all areas."

Thematic Category 3. Areas for Improvement for the Successful Implementation at the Tier 1 Level of PBIS

The study's third and final thematic category consisted of the areas for improvement for the successful implementation at the Tier 1 Level of PBIS. From the analysis, the researcher found that the key recommendation of the respondents was the need to implement constant and clear communication to all stakeholders. According to them, communication would be the key to

the program's overall success. Meanwhile, five other minor themes found in Table 14 received limited references and may need further research to solidify their trustworthiness.

Table 14

Themes Addressing Thematic Category 3

Thematic Category	Themes	Subthemes	Number of References	Percentage of References
TC3. Areas for improvement for the successful implementation at the Tier 1 level of PBIS	Needing to implement constant and clear communication to all stakeholders		6	35%
	Needing to implement consistent negative consequences		4	24%
	Emphasizing the positive traits and behaviors of the students		3	18%
	Focusing on nonclassroom areas		2	12%
	Needing complete support and buy-in from staff members		2	12%
	Highlighting behavior expectations from students		1	6%

Major Theme 5: Needing to Implement Constant and Clear Communication to All Stakeholders. The fifth and final major theme was the recommendation of practicing and implementing proper communication across the stakeholders. Six of the respondents explained that communication might resolve the gaps and issues in the program. From experience, Respondent 4 admitted,

> We do not do a very good job of consistently monitoring and tracking negative behaviors. Teachers are introduced to problem behaviors, but I feel nothing is done to the student when referrals are made. Communication is key to having a strong system.

For Respondent 6, a positive language and encouraging attitude may help improve the success of the program: "Clear behavioral expectations along with positive language." Meanwhile, Respondent 14 again reiterated the commitment to the program along with consistency and communication, stating, "I think the greatest focus area would be to have all staff using the PBIS program with fidelity. Students need to have consistency in all classroom and nonclassroom settings, in order for the program to be effective." Similarly, Respondent 15 called for the following:

> I feel there needs to be better communication of student expectations with families in our neighborhoods. This needs to extend beyond signatures on a student handbook. An after-school assembly (with dinner to motivate attendance) or a video on our district website would suffice.

Finally, Respondent 17 touched on the need for positive relationships by mentioning "Procedures for encouraging school-family working relationships."

Summary

Chapter 4 of the study contained the results of the mixed-methods analysis of the survey data. The purpose of this mixed-method study was to analyze the fidelity of implementation levels of Tier 1 PBIS, as a strong foundation of PBIS is key to making advancements toward the secondary and tertiary tiers along with an overall successful school-wide system. More specifically, the researcher analyzed the current status of Tier 1 within three key areas: school-wide discipline systems, nonclassroom management systems, and classroom management systems. A total of 17 participants across three schools were recruited as the study sample. The

variables were measured using SAS and were quantitatively analyzed through the Kruskal-Wallis H-Test via SPSS. The quantitative analysis revealed that there were significant differences in the perceived status of the school-wide discipline systems among schools but none with nonclassroom management and classroom management systems. In Chapter 5, the researcher discusses the conclusions and provides recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Over the past several years, PBIS systems have been successfully implemented within elementary schools nationwide. Researchers have identified the critical components that aid schools in setting a foundation for successful implementation and sustainability of this model across the entire school. At the Tier 1 level, however, minimal research has been conducted highlighting comparisons of elementary schools and determining whether the same approaches—or similar mindsets of priority areas of implementation at the primary level—have been employed across the K-6 realm to establish the system. Although schools may be at different stages of implementation fidelity at Tier 1, it was crucial to determine whether there were commonalities to the ways in which schools have established this Tier within classroom and nonclassroom settings. More so, it was necessary to evaluate whether elementary schools settle on approaches that best suit one's needs by looking at possible patterns of successes, but also challenges and barriers to its implementation, even if schools are at varying years of Tier 1 implementation. Through this study, the researcher aimed to fill a scholarly gap regarding the comparison of fidelity.

Although it was difficult to find the number of U.S. schools that have been unsuccessful with PBIS Tier 1 implementation fidelity, it is clear that several factors are correlated with the diminishing program effectiveness in schools. Coffey and Horner (2012) identified key components to PBIS sustainability, including contextually appropriate innovation, a shared vision within schools, administrative support, ongoing technical and training assistance, data-based decision making and sharing, and continuous review/revision of a program. Through this study, the researcher sought to identify relationships between participant responses and research on successful implementation/sustainability to determine whether schools are working toward

finding those achievements. Additionally, the researcher sought to determine what specific areas of growth schools need guidance on to ensure the program does not deteriorate over time.

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to gather teachers' perceptions on the implementation fidelity of Tier 1 PBIS across multiple elementary school settings. Such findings led to analyzing the focal points of this study to determine whether the chosen elementary schools share commonalities of successes and barriers of what PBIS Tier 1 characteristics were currently in place, not yet in place, or partially in place, and whether years of implementation correlate with the impact of such perceptions by the general and special education teachers. Using closed-ended, Likert scale questions and open-ended responses, the researcher aimed to find patterns within the study and obtain detailed feedback on each school's implementation processes.

The methodology used for this study was mixed, in that both quantitative and qualitative approaches were employed. The researcher administered a portion of the Self-Assessment Survey (SAS) and three open-ended questions to gain insight into the area of focus. For this study, the SAS was amended to only focus on the current status of PBIS features, not the priorities for improvement, as the study's purpose was to analyze what is or is not present within the school settings. The three open-ended questions enabled the collection of more insight into the features and teacher perceptions of implementation status.

The population included both general and special education teachers across three elementary schools (K-6). The randomized sample comprised up to 25 teachers in the two districts in the study. Participants were given roughly 2 weeks to complete the survey via Google Forms. This aided in generating quick and accurate data analyzed in two ways. First, a correlative approach was used for the quantitative data to generate participants' responses to the

Likert scale questions. A dissection of the answers led to finding similar themes across all teachers and settings for the open-ended responses.

The dependent variable was the school-wide discipline systems, and the independent variable was the school type. The results of using the Kruskal Wallis H-Test are presented in Table 7. The results of this test showed a statistically significant difference in the perceived status of the school-wide discipline systems among schools ($\chi^2(2) = 10.56$, $p = 0.005$). There was a mean rank school-wide discipline systems score of 10.79 for lower elementary school (Lower Elementary), 12.50 for intermediate school (Intermediate Elementary), and 3.00 for K-6 school (K-6 Elementary). This indicates that participants from the intermediate school perceived that the implementation of school-wide discipline systems in their school is more prevalent, visible, or successful than the other two schools.

The results of using the Kruskal Wallis H-Test are presented in Table 8. The results of this test showed that there was no statistically significant difference in the perceived status of the nonclassroom management systems among schools ($\chi^2(2) = 2.59$, $p = 0.274$). This indicates that the participants' perceived implementation of nonclassroom management systems in their respective schools was almost similar. The implementation of nonclassroom management systems in three schools was mostly in place.

The results of using the Kruskal Wallis H-Test are presented in Table 9. The results of this test showed no statistically significant difference in the perceived status of the classroom management systems among schools ($\chi^2(2) = 1.25$, $p = 0.535$). This indicates that the participants' perceived implementation of classroom management systems in their respective schools was almost similar. The implementation of nonclassroom management systems in three schools was mostly in place.

The second component of the research was the qualitative analysis of the open-ended questions and answers of the respondents. The researcher formed three thematic categories to fully describe the phenomenon and maximize the respondents' responses. From the thematic analysis of the qualitative answers of the respondents, the researcher uncovered 23 themes addressing the first research question of the study. It must be noted that the researcher also considered the hierarchy of themes to better present the shared perceptions of the respondents. The major themes of the study are the most significant themes, as determined by the greatest number of references from the respondents. Meanwhile, the minor themes of the study were the other important themes, receiving fewer references than the major themes. Lastly, subthemes were incorporated as detailed examples of the parent or major and minor themes.

The qualitative research question asked: What are the main factors contributing to a successful implementation at the Tier 1 level of PBIS? The analysis found that the main characteristics needed for a successful implementation at the Tier 1 level of PBIS were encouraging buy-in from stakeholders and needing consistent language, communication, and policies across the school. Meanwhile, when asked about the proven successful strategies that are already in place, a majority of the respondents reported the value of informing and reminding the students about the expectations on a daily basis and integrating the teaching of values inside and outside the classroom. Finally, respondents recommended the need to implement constant and clear communication to all stakeholders for the successful implementation at the Tier 1 level of PBIS.

The remainder of this chapter includes a discussion of the significance of these findings. An interpretation of the findings is presented first, based on the extent to which they aligned with the literature and theory presented in Chapter 1. Limitations of the study that may have

influenced the results are then considered. Recommendations are then made based on these limitations and strategies for extending the research. Implications of the findings for research, practice, and social change are then discussed. This chapter concludes with a summary and outline of key points.

Interpretation of Findings

This section includes an interpretation of the findings. This discussion centers on each of the research questions and hypotheses. Consideration is first given to the quantitative findings. Then, the qualitative findings are discussed.

Quantitative Results

The first research question and hypothesis pertained to the perception of school-wide discipline systems. The dependent variable was the school-wide discipline systems, and the independent variable was the school type. The results of using the Kruskal Wallis H-Test are presented in Table 7. The results of this test showed a statistically significant difference in the perceived status of the school-wide discipline systems among schools ($\chi^2(2) = 10.56$, $p = 0.005$). There was a mean rank school-wide discipline systems score of 10.79 for lower elementary school (Lower Elementary), 12.50 for intermediate school (Intermediate Elementary), and 3.00 for K-6 school (K-6 Elementary). This indicates that participants from the intermediate school perceived that the implementation of school-wide discipline systems in their school was more prevalent, visible, or successful than the other two schools.

The findings of this study relate to literature pertained in Chapter 2 pertained to school-wide disciplinary systems. Also known as School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS), it is a multi-tiered approach that is "designed to foster safety, prosocial behavior, and academic readiness by outlining a structure to explicitly teach and reinforce these behaviors in school" (Solomon et al., 2015, p. 175). This implementation led to enhancing social

and academic outcomes for all learners. In the early years prior to school-wide PBIS being invented, many schools across the nation determined that the most appropriate ways of handling negative or unwanted behaviors came in the forms of the zero tolerance policies, physical restraints, suspensions, and/or school resource officers (SROs). Specifically, in the 1950s, it was not uncommon for restraints to be used within the school setting; however, many school districts were unable to provide safety regulations so that students would not be encountered with harm, bodily injury, or death (Freeman & Sugai, 2013). The results of the current study support this literature and have important implications for understanding school-wide disciplinary systems in contemporary institutions.

The results of using the Kruskal Wallis H-Test also demonstrated new insight regarding classroom management. The results of this test showed no statistically significant difference in the perceived status of the nonclassroom management systems among schools ($\chi^2(2) = 2.59$, $p = 0.274$). This indicates that the participants' perceived implementation of nonclassroom management systems in their respective schools was almost similar. The implementation of nonclassroom management systems in three schools is mostly in place. This finding also extends the literature presented in Chapter 2 pertaining to nonclassroom management of school disciplinary issues. Looking into changing both the mindset and approaches toward behavior, research was steered by Steinberg and Lacoe (2017) concerning the known information surrounding school discipline reform and the alternatives to suspensions and expulsions. *Nonclassroom setting systems* can be defined as the times or places in which behavior monitoring and supervision are strongly emphasized, such as in the hallways, bus, playground, and cafeteria (Steinberg & Lacoe, 2017). *Classroom systems* are the instructional settings where educators provide learning opportunities and supervise students (Freeman & Sugai, 2013).

Individual student systems are those strategies or supports provided to students who display chronic behavior problems (Evanovich & Scott, 2016). Each of these systems represents important aspects of discipline and the management of safe, educational environments for all students.

The results of the Kruskal Wallis H-Test are presented in Table 9. These results showed that there was no statistically significant difference in the perceived status of the classroom management systems among schools ($\chi^2(2) = 1.25$, $p = 0.535$). This indicates that the participants' perceived implementation of classroom management systems in their respective schools was almost similar. The implementation of nonclassroom management systems in three schools was mostly in place.

These findings also support the literature pertaining to behavior management systems. Behavior management systems can be classified as taking the necessary steps to increase students' motivation to change actions or interactions, such as classroom behavior or problem-solving skills (Evanovich & Scott, 2016). Some specific types of systems might include teacher-specific ones, reward systems for students, and databases to track information about behaviors (ScholarChip, 2019). Based on the current study results, it is evident that teachers' perceptions of classroom management implementation are relatively similar within each school's respective system of discipline.

Qualitative Results

The second component of the research was the qualitative analysis of the open-ended questions and answers of the respondents. The researcher formed three thematic categories to fully describe the phenomenon and maximize the respondents' responses. From the thematic analysis of the qualitative answers of the respondents, the researcher uncovered 23 themes addressing the first research question of the study.

These findings extend the literature presented in Chapter 2 and provide insight into the reliability of the data. Based upon the works of Kerr and Nelson (as cited in Evanovich & Scott, 2016), schools should develop three to five positively stated rules that are then explicitly taught in high-traffic areas such as restrooms, playgrounds, hallways, cafeteria, classrooms, and on the bus. When plans and strategies are in place for PBIS at the school-wide and classroom levels, teams must act upon individual/whole-group ownership through consistency and sustainability.

It must be noted that the current researcher also took into consideration the hierarchy of themes to better present the shared perceptions of the respondents. The major themes of the study are the most significant themes, as determined by the greatest number of references from the respondents. Meanwhile, the minor themes of the study were the other important themes, which received fewer references than the major themes. Lastly, subthemes were incorporated as detailed examples of the parent or major and minor themes. The findings outlined in Chapter 2 revealed that numerous different factors may influence policies associated with the behavioral support system (Evanovich & Scott, 2016).

In the current study, the qualitative research question asked: What are the main factors contributing to a successful implementation at the Tier 1 level of PBIS? Through the qualitative analysis, the researcher found that the main characteristics needed for a successful implementation at the Tier 1 level of PBIS were encouraging buy-in from stakeholders and needing the use of consistent language, communication, and policies across the school. Meanwhile, when asked about the proven successful strategies that are already in place, a majority of the respondents reported the value of informing and reminding the students about the expectations on a daily basis and integrating the teaching of values inside and outside the

classroom. Finally, respondents recommended the need to implement constant and clear communication to all stakeholders for the successful implementation at the Tier 1 level of PBIS.

This finding helps extend the literature presented in Chapter 2 pertaining to the assessment of disciplinary versus behavioral support systems. Specifically, while other assessments are limited to only the PBIS team members or coaches, it is encouraged to complete the SAS by as many teachers as possible within the school. PBIS Assessment Coordinators generate an online testing window that allows educators to complete annually online (PBISApps, 2019). Implementation, or the continuation of programs or intentional plans being adopted, does not come without the cost of being met with difficulties (or barriers) throughout the process that would, according to Pinkelman et al. (2015), impede the sustainability of a program—in this case, PBIS. The following section contains a discussion of limitations that potentially affected the results of this investigation.

Implications of Findings

The results from this study make a substantial contribution to the understanding of school disciplinary systems and behavioral support strategies. There are specific ways and strategies to ensure that PBIS Tier 1 implementation is prosperous within elementary schools. While schools and teams may take differing approaches to ensure the foundational growth, the focus of this research was to determine whether schools share the same perceptions and mindsets on what features of the implementation are currently in place, not yet in place, or partially in place within the school for Tier 1 inside and outside of the classroom along with attention on school-wide efforts. The results revealed that more effort is needed in order to coordinate and align school-wide disciplinary strategies.

Although it is difficult to find research identifying such comparisons in schools, this study hopes to locate possible correlations and determine if elementary schools and teachers

establish similar approaches to having a strong PBIS model, or if it is based on what the staff and teams take different approaches to its execution. Additionally, suppose participants of the study show the same aspects of the behavioral features being selected; in that case, the researcher would take a more detailed look at the status of each (in place, partially in place, not in place) to determine possible connections to implementation. Further, participants answered open-ended questions regarding the current status within the three focus areas to gain more detailed insight into the elementary implementation plans. The results suggest that there is still a need to understand educators' perceptions and lived experiences.

Understanding elementary PBIS systems will help guide future schools in determining the best course of action to begin building the groundwork of PBIS and take into consideration key areas. No matter the years of Tier 1 fidelity, these still need to be introduced or approved upon, and a plan of action can be developed. A comparison of school systems would lend itself to possible collaborative opportunities between administration or staff on PBIS implementation at the universal level and spearhead chances of sharing resources, strategies, and approaches for other schools to become better in areas of need. The following section concludes the research.

Limitations of the Study

Though these findings are believed to make a significant contribution to the understanding of school-wide disciplinary measures and systems, some limitations were present that require consideration. All school names, teacher names, and additional district information were not included within this study. Specific limitations to the study were the possibility of further interpretations of the data collected from participants along with not conducting the survey in-person but via online, preventing participants from asking immediate questions if confused on a certain area of the survey, which could lead to inaccurate scoring within a behavioral system.

Additionally, the survey was administered to teachers who volunteered to participate, so there was a mix of educators with differing classroom focus areas such as special education or general education backgrounds. This survey was conducted the year following a national pandemic, and in the prior school year, many focus areas of school districts—like PBIS—may not have been a top priority to school staff, especially if students were in a remote setting and not displaying negative behaviors, leading to possible effects on this study due to schools needing to shift back to emphasizing the program's vitality with the majority of students returning in-person during the 2021–2022 academic year.

Further, only general and special educators in the buildings were invited to participate in this study. Therefore, consideration for future studies would be to extend the opportunities to all educators and administrators in the school to gain more information from an increased number of participants. More so, additional building members should be allowed to provide feedback on the PBIS model because all members of the building are important to the success of Tier 1 implementation fidelity. An additional consideration would be to conduct in-person interviews with the survey questions compared to a digital format on Google Forms, the results of which could provide opportunities toward expanding on questions and gaining more insight from the participants that would strengthen the research findings even more. With the survey and open-ended responses only identifying perceptions of the current status of PBIS Tier 1 implementation with the focus areas, it may be recommended for future research to have the entire SAS completed by participants—including priority for improvement—to gain a more accurate picture of the behavioral management system across the three buildings. This would allow the usage of the reports from SAS for increased accuracy of results. The following section contains a more in-

depth discussion of the recommendations that can be made based on the evidence presented in this study.

Recommendations for Future Research

Several recommendations can be made based on the findings generated from this research. First, the findings suggest that more understanding of the needs of schools is a requisite to achieving improvements pertaining to school-wide disciplinary programs. Having a concrete understanding of what is needed—such as materials, resources, training, time, or continuous program evaluation—guides schools to finding achievements, specifically at the Tier 1 level. For newer initiatives, it is imperative to maintain and increase resources if needed to construct a strong foundation for a program's success. Removing such items takes away from the importance of PBIS and weakens opportunities for continuous growth and sustainability.

Additionally, it is recommended that the prevention of disciplinary action be emphasized. Prevention supports at a more frequent level help with more opportunities to practice desired behaviors and develop individualized skills needed to promote positive outcomes (Center on PBIS, 2021). To help continue to make this change across the nation even more widespread, schools also needed to focus on how to provide effective and safe training on restorative behavioral management practices if School Resource Officers (SROs) are a necessity within buildings. Within this tier, interventions are not only more intensive, but additional materials are needed to place a better focus on the smaller group of individuals.

Finally, recommendations can be made for Tier 3 as well. Several factors are needed to ensure a highly effective Tier 3 plan for general and special education students. A multidisciplinary team consisting of administration, a coach, and others is already equipped with knowledge of providing these supports within the school. More importantly, an individual on the committee must have experience with applied behavior analysis or multiagency support. The

following section contains a discussion of the implications that can be drawn based on the findings of this research.

Summary and Conclusions

In conclusion, the purpose of this mixed-methods study was to gather teachers' perceptions on the implementation fidelity of Tier 1 PBIS across multiple elementary school settings. Such findings then led to analyzing the focal points of this study to determine whether the chosen elementary schools share commonalities of successes and barriers of what PBIS Tier 1 characteristics were currently in place, not yet in place, or partially in place, and whether years of implementation correlate with the impact of such perceptions by the general and special education teachers. Using closed-ended, Likert scale questions and open-ended responses, the researcher aimed to identify patterns within the study and obtain detailed feedback on each school's implementation processes.

This chapter included a discussion of the significance of the findings that were generated from Chapter 4. An interpretation of the findings was presented first, based on the extent to which they aligned with the literature and theory presented in Chapter 2. Limitations of the study that may have influenced the results were then considered. Recommendations were then made based on these limitations and strategies for extending the research. Implications of the findings for research, practice, and social change were then discussed. Based on the evidence presented in this study, the researcher has concluded that improvements are still needed regarding school-wide disciplinary systems, although they do appear to be perceived positively by practitioners. This concludes Chapter 5 and the dissertation.

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APPENDIX A: SAS SURVEY AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

PBIS Self-Assessment Survey (SAS)
Assessing and Planning Behavior Support in Schools
(Amended for research purposes)

Purpose of the Survey

The PBIS Self-Assessment Survey (SAS) is used by school staff for initial and annual assessment of effective behavior support systems in their school. The survey examines the status of three behavior support systems: (a) school-wide discipline systems, (b) non-classroom management systems (e.g., cafeteria, hallway, playground, and (c) classroom management systems. Each question in the survey relates to one of the three systems.

Survey results are summarized and used for a variety of purposes including:

1. annual action planning,
2. internal decision making,
3. assessment of change over time,
4. awareness building of staff, and
5. team validation.

The survey summary is used to develop an action plan for implementing and sustaining effective behavioral support systems throughout the school (see "Developing a PBIS Annual Action Plan").

Conducting the SAS

Who completes the survey?

- For this study, general and special education teachers will complete the study to gain insight on Tier 1 of PBIS within the general and special education classrooms.

How is the survey completed?

1. Complete the survey independently.
2. Schedule 20-30 minutes to complete the survey.
3. Base your rating on your individual experiences in the school.
4. Mark (i.e., "√" or "X") on the left side of the page for current status.
5. To assess behavior support, first evaluate the status of each system feature (i.e., *in place, partially in place, not in place*) (left hand side of survey). Next, examine each feature:
    a. "What is the current status of this feature (i.e., *in place, partially in place, not in place*

(PBIS) Self-Assessment Survey
Assessing and Planning Behavior Support in Schools

Name of School _____ Date _____

District _____

Number of Years of PBIS Tier 1 Implementation _____

Person Completing the Survey (Circle One):

Special Educator General Educator

1. Complete the survey independently.
2. Schedule 20-30 minutes to complete the survey.
3. Base your rating on your individual experiences in the school. If you do not work in classrooms, answer questions that are applicable to you.

   To assess behavior support, first evaluate the status of each system feature (i.e., *in place, partially in place, not in place*) (left hand side of survey). Next, examine the feature:

   a. "What is the current status of this feature (i.e., *in place, partially in place, not in place*)?"

4. Complete the interview questions.
5. Return survey and questions once completed.

SCHOOL-WIDE SYSTEMS

Current Status			Feature
In Place	Partial in Place	Not in Place	**School-wide** is defined as involving all students, all staff, & all settings.
			1. A small number (e.g., 3-5) of positively & clearly stated student expectations or rules are defined.
			2. Expected student behaviors are taught directly.
			3. Expected student behaviors are rewarded regularly.
			4. Problem behaviors (failure to meet expected student behaviors) are defined clearly.
			5. Consequences for problem behaviors are defined clearly.
			6. Distinctions between office v. classroom managed problem behaviors are clear.
			7. Options exist to allow classroom instruction to continue when problem behavior occurs.
			8.Procedures are in place to address emergency/dangerous situations.
			9. A team exists for behavior support planning & problem solving.
			10. School administrator is an active participant on the behavior support team.
			11. Data on problem behavior patterns are collected and summarized within an on-going system.
			12. Patterns of student problem behavior are reported to teams and faculty for active decision-making on a regular basis (e.g., monthly).
			13. School has formal strategies for informing families about expected student behaviors at school.
			14. Booster training activities for students are developed, modified, & conducted based on school data.
			15. School-wide behavior support team has a budget for (a) teaching students, (b) on-going rewards, and (c) annual staff planning.
			16. All staff are involved directly and/or indirectly in school-wide interventions.
			17. The school team has access to on-going training and support from district personnel.
			18. The school is required by the district to report on the social climate, discipline level or student behavior at least annually.

NONCLASSROOM SETTING SYSTEMS

Current Status			Feature
In Place	Partial in Place	Not in Place	**Non-classroom settings** are defined as times or places where supervision is emphasized (e.g., hallways, cafeteria, playground, bus).
			1. School-wide expected student behaviors apply to non-classroom settings.
			2. School-wide expected student behaviors are taught in non-classroom settings.
			3. Supervisors actively supervise (move, scan, & interact) students in non-classroom settings.
			4. Rewards exist for meeting expected student behaviors in non-classroom settings.
			5. Physical/architectural features are modified to limit (a) unsupervised settings, (b) unclear traffic patterns, and (c) inappropriate access to & exit from school grounds.
			6. Scheduling of student movement ensures appropriate numbers of students in non-classroom spaces.
			7. Staff receives regular opportunities for developing and improving active supervision skills.
			8. Status of student behavior and management practices are evaluated quarterly from data.
			9. All staff are involved directly or indirectly in management of non-classroom settings.

CLASSROOM SYSTEMS

Current Status			Feature
In Place	Partial in Place	Not in Place	**Classroom settings** are defined as instructional settings in which teacher(s) supervise & teach groups of students.
			1. Expected student behavior & routines in classrooms are stated positively & defined clearly.
			2. Problem behaviors are defined clearly.
			3. Expected student behavior & routines in classrooms are taught directly.
			4. Expected student behaviors are acknowledged regularly (positively reinforced) (>4 positives to 1 negative).
			5. Problem behaviors receive consistent consequences.
			6. Procedures for expected & problem behaviors are consistent with school-wide procedures.
			7. Classroom-based options exist to allow classroom instruction to continue when problem behavior occurs.
			8. Instruction & curriculum materials are matched to student ability (math, reading, language).
			9. Students experience high rates of academic success (≥ 75% correct).
			10. Teachers have regular opportunities for access to assistance & recommendations (observation, instruction, & coaching).
			11. Transitions between instructional & non-instructional activities are efficient & orderly.

Part II. Interview Questions

Directions: Read the questions and answer to the best of your ability

1. Explain the main factors or characteristics you think are needed within a school to implement and maintain a strong, consistent Tier 1 level of PBIS.

2. In your experience, describe which feature (from the survey) you feel is the biggest strength of Tier 1 implementation within your school, non-classroom, or classroom setting and why.

3. In your experience, describe which feature (from the survey) you feel is the greatest focus to improve or begin PBIS Tier 1 implementation within your school, non-classroom, or classroom setting and why.

APPENDIX B: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) APPROVAL

SlipperyRock University of Pennsylvania

TO: Dr. Ashlea Rineer-Hershey
Special Education

FROM: James A. Preston
James A. Preston, D.Ed., Vice Chairperson
Institutional Review Board (IRB)

DATE: January 18, 2022

RE: Protocol Approved

Protocol #: 2022-017-88-B
Protocol Title: Analyzing and Comparing Similarities and Perceptions of Current Status and Years of Experience Regarding Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Tier One Implementation Across Multiple K-6 Schools

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Slippery Rock University has received and reviewed the requested modification(s) to the above-referenced protocol utilizing the expedited review process. The IRB has approved the protocol effective January 18, 2022.

You may begin your project as of January 18, 2022. Your approved protocol will expire on January 17, 2023. You will need to submit a Progress/Final Report at least 7 days prior to the expiration date.

Enclosed are copies of the approved consent and assent forms to be copied for participants to sign. (if applicable)

If you complete the study within the next year, please notify the IRB with a Final Report. The Final Report form and instructions can be found on the IRB website.

Please contact the IRB Office by phone at (724)738-4846 or via email at irb@sru.edu should your protocol change in any way.

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania

Approved
January 18, 2022
Slippery Rock University
Institutional Review Board

CONSENT TO PARTICPATE IN RESEARCH

Analyzing and Comparing Similarities and Perceptions of Current Status and Years of Experience Regarding Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Tier One Implementation Across Multiple K-6 Schools

Principal Investigator: Dr. Ashlea Rineer-Hershey, Ed.D.
Phone: 723-738-2460
Email: a.rineer-hershey@sru.edu

Co-Investigator: William Schleicher, Doctoral Student Candidate
Phone: 412-551-5783
Email: wxs1010@sru.edu

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Participants for this pilot study must:

- Be 18 years of age or older.
- Be employed presently as a general or special education teacher in an educational organization.
- Be a teacher or administrator within an educational organization (charter school, school district, etc.).
- Have a general to advanced understanding of positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) and Tier 1 implementation within a school system.

Important Information about the Research Study

Things you should know:

- The purpose of the study is to investigate the views and perceptions of elementary and special education teachers regarding Tier 1 implementation of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) within several elementary buildings. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete a Google Form consisting of 38 questions for a Self-Assessment Survey (SAS) followed by three open-ended questions. This will take approximately 10-15 minutes.
- There are no known risks associated with taking part in this research study.
- For those participating in the study, participants will gain a deeper understanding of the current systems in place for their PBIS programs at the beginning level (Tier 1). The comparison of the program in surrounding schools, along with educator perceptions of one's own program's strength and areas of focus, will lend to developing future strategies and considerations to guide the participants to improving classroom techniques focused on positive behavior. This data will lend toward not only bettering the Tier 1 level within the schools over time, but it will guide the

educators to having a better understanding of how to build relationships and work with students to finding proactive solutions to negative behaviors.

- Taking part in this research project is voluntary. You do not have to participate, and you can stop at any time.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the Study About and Why are We Doing it?

By conducting research within three elementary schools, the purpose of this study is to investigate the views and perceptions of elementary and special education teachers regarding Tier 1 implementation of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Within each building at differing years of implementation, the study plans to analyze: 1) The main factors of contributing to a successful implementation at the Tier 1 level, 2) overall perspective of implementation along with differences and similarities, 3) if years of current implementation impact the status or priority of improvement in each of the four behavior support systems, 4) and what features of school-wide PBIS are currently developed and established with a perception of higher priorities compared to those at lesser levels.

What Will Happen if You Take Part in This Study?

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to complete a Google Form consisting of 38 Likert-scale questions and three open-ended responses. This will be completed at whatever time is most convenient for the consenting participants during the four-week window. We expect this to take about 10-15 minutes, and the data collected from participants will only be used within this research to determine results and not linked to any other outside data.

How Could You Benefit From This Study?

For those participating in the study, participants will gain a deeper understanding of the current systems in place for their PBIS programs at the beginning level (Tier 1). The comparison of the program in surrounding schools, along with educator perceptions of one's own program's strength and areas of focus, will lend to developing future strategies and considerations to guide the participants to improving classroom techniques focused on positive behavior. This data will lend toward not only bettering the Tier 1 level within the schools over time, but it will guide the educators to having a better understanding of how to build relationships and work with students to finding proactive solutions to negative behaviors.

What Risks Might Result from Being in This Study?

There are no known risks that might result from being in this study.

How Will We Protect Your Information?

We plan to publish the results of this study. To protect your privacy, we will not include information that could directly identify you. The results of this study may be published or presented at a conference. The researcher(s) will ask for separate written permission to include your name or other information that could identify you.

We will protect the confidentiality of your research records by sending you a private Google Forms link that only gives you access to complete the form. It will block against outside threats to the research

along with possible confiscation of individual data. Your name and any other information that can directly identify you will be stored separately from the data collected as part of the project in a private/locked Folder only obtained by the researcher.

What Will Happen to the Information We Collect About You After the Study is Over?

We will not keep your research data to use for future research or other purposes. Your name and other information that can directly identify you will be kept secure and stored separately from the research data collected as part of the project. All consent forms will be shredded within 24 hours of study completion but stored and locked in a secure location (such as a safe or private filing cabinet) during data analysis and collection. Data will be stored from the digital Self-Assessment Survey (SAS) and open-ended responses created on the Google Forms.

How Will We Compensate You for Being Part of the Study?

You will receive a $5 Starbucks gift card for your participation in this study. If the subject withdraws from the research before the end of the study, compensation will not be given.

What are the Costs to You to be Part of the Study?

To participate in the study, there are no known costs to the participants.

What Other Choices do I Have if I Don't Take Part in this Study?

If you choose not to participate, there are no alternatives.

Your Participation in this Research is Voluntary

Up to eight (8) participants from your school will be accepted into this study for a maximum total of up to 24 participants. If you wish to participate but is after the eighth participant from your school have been reached, your form will be placed in a secure, locked location in the order in which it was received. If participants withdraw from the study for any reason, additional volunteers will be chosen in order from the secured wait list to ask to participate. It is totally up to you to decide to be in this research study. Participating in this study is voluntary. Even if you decide to be part of the study now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. If you decide to withdraw before this study is completed, consent forms will be shredded within 24 hours. Until then, forms will be stored and locked in a secure location such as a safe or private filing cabinet.

Digital responses on the forms will also be permanently deleted from the online folder.

Contact Information for the Study Team and Questions about the Research

If you have questions about this research, you may contact **William Schleicher** by phone, **412-551-5783**, or via email, **wxs1010@sru.edu.**

Contact Information for Questions about Your Rights as a Research Participant

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the following:

Institutional Review Board
Slippery Rock University
104 Maltby, Suite 008
Slippery Rock, PA 16057
Phone: (724)738-4846
Email: irb@sru.edu

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. I/We will give you a copy of this document for your records. I/We will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I understand what the study is about and my questions so far have been answered. I agree to take part in this study. I understand that I can withdraw at any time. A copy of this signed Consent Form has been given to me.

_____	_____	_____
Printed Participant Name	Signature of Participant	Date

By signing below, I indicate that the participant has read and to the best of my knowledge understands the details contained in this document and have been given a copy.

_____	_____	_____
Printed Name of Investigator	Signature of Investigator	Date