

Impact of School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS)

Focusing on Staff Perceptions and Student Behaviors

A Doctoral Capstone Project

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

Department of Education

In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

David R. Turk Jr.
Pennsylvania Western University

July 2023

Pennsylvania Western University
School of Graduate Studies and Research
Department of Education

We hereby approve the capstone of

David R. Turk Jr.

Candidate for the Degree of Doctor of Education

7-12-23



Dr. Mary Wolf
Assistant Professor
Doctoral Capstone Faculty Committee Chair

7-12-2023



Dr. Amy Filipowski
Director of Special Education
Doctoral Capstone External Committee Chair

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this doctoral journey to my children, wife, family and friends. I am blessed to have a lot of great people around me, and I love you all for always supporting me.

To my children June, Henry and Teddy, I have worked so hard throughout my life to achieve great things. More importantly, I have worked to provide a life for you that is better than what I had. Achieving this doctorate degree is not about money, but instead about a personal accomplishment to demonstrate that hard work pays off. I have never been the smartest person, but I have always taken pride in my work ethic and ability to push through a difficult task, when others may quit. I hope that you see this drive and determination and that it motivates you to find what you are passionate about and never give up.

To my wife Kelly, you are amazing and have always supported me throughout this doctorate degree and in my career. I hope that I have made you proud. My dream is that we will continue to create great life experiences together with our beautiful children. I want to make sure that we always continue going on “adventures,” even when our kids think that it is no longer cool. Kelly, I could not ask for a better person to call my wife and I hope you know how much I love you.

To my family and friends. Life has not always been the easiest for me to navigate. I was raised in a tumultuous home situation, but I have always had family and friends who have lifted me up and supported me during my darkest times. I am proud to say that I am the first person in my family to achieve this prestigious degree and I know that I could not have done it without you all. I sit back and think about how this little boy

from the northside of Pittsburgh has actually made something of himself and more than likely shocked a lot of people in the process. Trust me, I know that I could not have done this without your support. I unfortunately lost my mother when she was 36 years old, and I am now proud to say that I am achieving this doctorate degree at the age of 36. I hope that you are all proud of me and know that I could not have done it without you all.

Acknowledgements

I must take a moment to thank my faculty committee chair, Dr. Mary Wolf. Dr. Wolf, you have been nothing but amazing and I cannot thank you enough for your support, feedback and overall guidance. I truly hope that we will keep in touch and that you will continue to help guide me as a leader.

To the teachers that participated in my research, thank you. I was very lucky to have been given the opportunity to work with you during my three years as a leader in your school district. I look back on my experiences with you and realize how valuable you all have been to me as a person and a leader. I have shared a lot of conversations and difficult times with you, and I hope you know how much I respect you all.

To one of my most favorite people and external committee chair, Dr. Amy Filipowski. You have been a major support through this doctoral process and also my administrative career. I am very fortunate to have met you and had you serve as my guide during this process. I hope you know how much I value your friendship and appreciate your mentorship.

My list on who to acknowledge could go on and on. I wanted to be sure to thank the individuals who directly supported me during this doctoral journey. I hope that other people in my life know that you are important to me as well. WE DID IT!

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Abstract

School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) is a framework that has been proven to be effective at elementary and secondary schools through ongoing research. The researched middle school educates students grades 6-8 and is located in Western Pennsylvania. The middle school reintroduced their SWPBIS PRIDE program back to its staff and students during the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year after a COVID-19 hiatus. Managing student behaviors was a difficult task post the COVID-19 shutdown. The middle school wanted to provide students and staff with a positive reward system for following expectations versus only relying on punitive practices to address negative student behaviors. This mixed methods research is focused on analyzing staff perceptions in conjunction with out-of-school suspensions (OSS) and SWPBIS data to understand the SWPBIS program's effectiveness and sustainability. The research compared quantitative and qualitative data focused on the 2021-2022 and the 2022-2023 school year. Results indicated that the SWPBIS rewards had no impact on improving students receiving OSS. The SWPBIS program itself did not improve the OSS numbers at the middle school. Finally, the middle school staff's perception of the SWPBIS program improved from year one to year two of implementation. Findings from this action research will be utilized to improve the researched SWPBIS program, as well as other schools who currently implement a SWPBIS program.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

School discipline is a difficult occurrence that many school districts and administrators face. School discipline has been slowly transitioning to a more positive approach that addresses students through a reward system rather than disciplinary consequences. The suburban district in Western Pennsylvania being researched has specifically faced a host of disciplinary issues over its inception from a Junior High to a Middle School with a high number of out-of-school suspensions. A School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (SWPBIS) program has been implemented to help the middle school positively target disciplinary issues by offering students rewards for following specific expectations of the PRIDE program which stands for Productive, Respect, Integrity, Determination and Excellence (Appendix A). The goal with any school program is to garnish a buy-in from students, staff, parents and other important stakeholders so that everyone collaborates to support students efficiently and effectively.

Background of the Study

During his past eleven years, the researcher has served the suburban district in Western Pennsylvania as a teacher, coach, assistant principal, acting middle school principal and athletic director. More recently, the researcher was the acting principal at the middle school while also serving as the school district athletic director. The researcher's first year as an assistant principal (2019-2020) was the first year of the inception of PRIDE, which is the school's SWPBIS program. Discipline is a focal point

of the assistant principal role and important to the researcher given their stance of educating students on their behaviors and focusing on positivity. Shortly after the initial implementation of the SWPBIS program, the school was shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During the 2020-2021 school year, the SWPBIS program was not implemented due to the school district's health and safety plan following COVID-19 recommendations.

The PRIDE SWPBIS program is an important part of the researcher's history as an administrator. School discipline is a tough topic, specifically at the researched middle school considering the number of disciplinary issues the school has faced since the school transitioned from a junior high (grades 7-8) to a middle school (grades 6-8) during the 2018-2019 school year. During the 2018-2019 school year, the school district chose to create a dean of students position to help support the addition of the 6th grade within the school building. The school year was difficult, with discipline being a main concern, and the school district using only historical disciplinary practices. During the summer before the 2019-2020 school year, the school district elected to go a different route by hiring the researcher as the assistant principal. The researcher worked with the principal and staff at the middle school to kick off the SWPBIS program during the start of the school year. The focus of the SWPBIS program was to create a positive culture and environment for students and staff by rewarding students for positive actions. The PRIDE program was an initial success until it was halted by the COVID-19 shutdown March 13, 2020. The researcher was an integral team member to reimplementing the SWPBIS program during the start of the 2021-2022 school year after a year and half interruption.

Capstone Focus

SWPBIS is a framework that school districts use to provide three tiers of interventions to positively promote expectations in all areas of a school building. SWPBIS is an important system that can help to improve the culture of a school building while also decreasing the number of disciplinary consequences. This doctoral capstone research project will focus on staff perceptions of the middle school's SWPBIS program called PRIDE. This research will also have a focal point on school discipline, specifically reviewing out-of-school suspensions, analyzing quantitative data over the course of two school years. Utilizing the qualitative and quantitative data accumulated and analyzed in this doctoral capstone research, the goal will be to determine the impact of the SWPBIS program. Reducing school exclusions is a vital element of improving the educational experience for all staff and students within the middle school. The culture and climate of a school play a vital role in its overall success when it comes to improving educational practices. The research data will provide school leaders with an important correlation between the out-of-school suspension (OSS) data in comparison with the staff perceptions of the current SWPBIS program.

Research Questions

The research questions are targeted to investigate the impact of the SWPBIS program at the middle school level utilizing mixed methods research:

1. How does the current SWPBIS program impact student behaviors reviewing rewards?

2. What impact does the SWPBIS program have on the number of out-of-school suspensions?
3. What is the middle school staff's perception of the effectiveness of the SWPBIS program from year one to year two of implementation?

Expected Outcomes

SWPBIS programs have been proven to be effective with positively educating and rewarding students regarding appropriate behaviors in a school building. School leaders and SWPBIS team members must take the time to properly implement an SWPBIS program and collect data to make necessary adjustments to improve their overall program. The impact of the doctoral research project will provide the middle school stakeholders with invaluable data on various levels. The results will display direct disciplinary data in relation to the effectiveness of the SWPBIS program. This data will give school leaders and SWPBIS team members crucial information regarding alterations and updates to continue to improve the SWPBIS program. More importantly, the data will help the entire school staff to make better informed decisions that directly affect its student population. With the increase in social/emotional and behavioral issues post the COVID-19 shutdown, many schools are struggling to proactively manage student behaviors. This doctoral research project will serve as an improvement tool towards targeting what areas need to be better focused on when addressing negative student behaviors through a positive reward system. By targeting the SWPBIS program, the goal will be to utilize quantitative and qualitative data to make important improvements to help address negative student behaviors and improve the overall school environment. The outcomes of this doctoral capstone project will be important beyond the school

district as well. The quantitative and qualitative data will be a useful tool for any school that plans to introduce a new SWPBIS program. The data from the 2021-2022 school year serves as a valuable baseline due to the reintroduction of the program after a hiatus since March of 2020 (COVID-19 shutdown). The data will show the results of a “new” SWPBIS program in relation to out-of-school suspension (OSS) data and staff perceptions of the program’s effectiveness. This data will help other school districts to avoid mistakes and implement a stronger intervention program to help meet the needs of their students and staff.

Fiscal Implications

Fiscally, this doctoral research project is unique due to the nature of the SWPBIS program’s inception. The SWPBIS program is completely funded through donations by community stakeholders. The school does not provide the SWPBIS program with any direct budgetary allotment. Even the indirect cost of staff members' time does not occur during the school day. The SWPBIS meetings all occur after the school day when students are not in the building. The research itself will include surveys, an interview, discipline data and SWPBIS data. The participants will complete the surveys and interviews during non-school hours. Microsoft Forms will be used to complete the surveys and the interviews will be conducted through a Zoom video conference. Notes from the interviews will be collected via Microsoft Word. Discipline and SWPBIS data will be collected through the district’s student information system and word documents. The overall costs of the doctoral research will be indirect with the only cost being staff members volunteered time to participate in the research study.

Summary

Chapter I introduced the importance of a SWPBIS program and how it targets negative student behaviors through an educational and reward framework. The research focuses on mixed methods data collection reviewing staff perceptions and discipline data to determine the impact of the middle school's SWPBIS program. The researcher will collect both qualitative and quantitative data to achieve the expected outcomes of the doctoral research. The overall goal is to provide valuable data to help make continuous improvements to any SWPBIS program. Chapter II transitions to a literature review which will correlate this doctoral research with previous research studies. The goal with the literature review section will be to utilize previous research studies and tell a story regarding the focus of this doctoral research.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

The Impact of SWPBIS review of literature begins with best practices for implementation of the SWPBIS model. This section then narrows its focus onto SWPBIS at the middle school level. The main goal of best practice is to set the stage for the importance of SWPBIS and encompasses the middle school grades for the purpose of this research.

Understanding staff experiences with SWPBIS programs is invaluable as a researcher and as an educational professional working to implement a productive intervention program. Perceptions of intervention programs will directly correlate with the qualitative portion of this research. The other key focus of SWPBIS perceptions and experiences are potential concerns that come into play when executing an SWPBIS program. SWPBIS has a positive side to its application, but it is important to also note concerns that have been roadblocks towards effective execution.

The quantitative aspect of research focuses on exclusions in schools. School discipline, disabilities and race/ethnicity are three subsections that provide important information related to SWPBIS and exclusions in a school. Race and ethnicity are important to note for the fact that the middle school of study educates a diverse population of students. The district also has students with disabilities at 23% of the total population.

Finally, the effectiveness and sustainability of SWPBIS concludes the review of literature. An important element to performing a SWPBIS program is utilizing research

that identifies if a SWPBIS program is effective and sustainable. These two key concepts are vital when conducting research to provide examples of the effectiveness and sustainability of a SWPBIS program and to ensure appropriate implementation of time and resources. School stakeholders are vested in their programs and are held accountable to show results with implementation and sustaining positive results.

School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS)

“Schools and districts nationwide are experiencing a rapid increase in the number of students needing a variety of behavioral supports to access their education” (Djabrayan Hannigan & Hannigan, 2020, p. 36). SWPBIS is a growing intervention framework that is being used more and more by school districts across the United States of America to proactively and positively address negative student behaviors. “The term positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) is used interchangeably in the literature with positive behavior supports (PBS), school-wide positive behavior supports (SWPBS), or school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports (SWPBIS)” (Brouillette, 2020, p. 10). SWPBIS is used as the terminology for the purposes of this research. SWPBIS provides users with a system of evidence-based supports focused on academic and prosocial behaviors of students while working to foster a positive school climate (Noltemeyer et al., 2019, p. 81). The framework consists of three tiers (universal, supplemental and individualized/intensive supports). Tier 1 is considered the universal tier. With a goal of providing behavioral expectations, Tier 1 is focused on various parts of the school building, details on what these behaviors look like and a reward for students who accomplish this behavior, meeting the criteria. Tier 2 is considered the supplemental tier and provides targeted students (not meeting expectations) with another layer of

support. Finally, Tier 3 is the individualized/intensive support which is specific on a student basis, and implemented for students who show consistent data towards not meeting expectations with the interventions offered in Tier 1 and Tier 2.

Research shows that the SWPBIS model can be an effective alternative to traditional reactive/punitive approaches when working to combat negative student behaviors (Nocera et al., 2014). Research identifies SWPBIS as a systematic, research-based approach to improve appropriate student behaviors in the school setting while decreasing negative student behaviors (Brouillette, 2020). Managing negative student behaviors is not an easy task for school staff and administrators to balance with other important academic initiatives. “A PBIS approach offers schools a way to manage student behaviors in an efficient, streamlined process that utilizes a framework within which every school member can operate” (Brouillette, 2020, p. 11).

Best Practices

Best practices of SWPBIS are introduced and defined by Walter (2020) with a strong emphasis on meeting the needs of students:

SWPBIS was introduced in the early 1990s and was based on a tiered public health prevention model aimed at addressing the behavioral and emotional needs of students through the use of positive and proactive behavioral management techniques and the appropriate provision of services based on each student’s needs. (p. 10)

SWPBIS programs are essential in today’s school districts to implement best practices of school discipline. Typical disciplinary practices are more punitive in nature and have

proven to not be effective over years of use by school districts across America. Education has evolved over the years and positively rewarding students is becoming the norm when it comes to disciplinary practices. It is important that school districts begin to incorporate SWPBIS into their culture and also build upon the interventions to develop a strong and advancing program aimed towards the gold standard of execution.

A SWPBIS model has a gold standard of performance known as the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Champion Model. Djabrayan Hannigan and Hannigan (2020) notes the relationship between behavior incidents and negative student academic achievement outcomes continues to be a concern for teachers throughout the nation (p. 36). Considering this concern, it is important that all schools seek out a different means when creating interventions to address negative student behaviors. The behaviors are not only affecting the culture of the school but also have a direct negative impact on student achievement levels. SWPBIS practices provide its users with elements that are tiered supports.

The Universal Tier of SWPBIS, or Tier 1, includes school-wide expectations and incentives that support all students within a school setting (Brouillette, 2020). Part of the implementation process is that schools want to ensure that they are incorporating the three tiers of SWPBIS to ensure that they are focused on an improved educational experience for all students. The goal of Tier 1 is to provide a positive reward system that encompasses all students and acts as a base system for SWPBIS. Staff will clearly teach a set of three to five positive, social-behavioral expectations that apply to all students in all school settings, acknowledge acceptable student behavior and apply consistent consequences for behavioral violations (Feuerborn et al., 2017). Through the Champion

model, additional indicators are in place to ensure that school districts accomplish the targets set for a productive SWPBIS model. Tier 1 evidence indicators of the Champion model consist of monthly meeting dates, completed agendas, SWPBIS team, SWPBIS coach, monthly staff email updates, staff training and a flowchart for discipline responses to name a few (Djabrayan Hannigan & Hannigan, 2020). There are other indicators associated with a Tier 1 school, however it is feasible because 113 of the 117 schools in the research study conducted by Djabrayan Hannigan and Hannigan (2020) met the requirements. An important element of a Tier 1 SWPBIS program is that the approach should be implemented in all areas of the school (Brouillette, 2020). Implementation in all areas ensures that the entire school building is consistently using the SWPBIS framework and terminology across environments.

Tier 2 evidence indicators of the Champion model add in more layers of support to provide a productive intervention system focused on positive student behavior. The Tier 2 expansive indicators are bi-monthly meeting dates with completed agendas, a behavior specialist team member, Tier 2 SMART goals, entrance criteria for each Tier 2 intervention and a process established for fidelity checks to detail out a few (Djabrayan Hannigan & Hannigan, 2020). In the research by Djabrayan Hannigan and Hannigan (2020), 94 out of the 117 schools met the Tier 2 standard. Tier 2 provides schools with additional supports for students if they currently meet the criteria for Tier 1. A SWPBIS program can still be effective as a Tier 1 program, but adding additional elements focused on teamwork and prioritizing student behavior will only benefit in a positive way.

The gold standard of the PBIS Champion model is Tier 3. Tier 3 evidence indicators consist of weekly meeting dates with completed agendas, a Tier 3 leader

established, staff updates regarding Tier 3 at least weekly, roles and responsibilities clear for general and special education staff and threat assessment expertise available at school to note some of the indicators (Djabrayan Hannigan & Hannigan, 2020). Tier 3 is more difficult to achieve and the research by Djabrayan Hannigan and Hannigan (2020) analyzed how 86 of the 117 schools met the standard to qualify as a Tier 3 school. Programs that are new do not need to worry about jumping immediately to the Tier 3 standard focused around a strong positive behavior program to intensive interventions. Instead, schools need to take the time to establish buy-in and truly build a SWPBIS program with students at the forefront and staff members developing essential skills to help support the students and one another.

Brouillette (2020) notes how all teachers and staff members were able to have voice in the SWPBIS expectations, therefore they had buy-in whenever implementing the program. Academic progress is another important motivator. High and medium-fidelity schools had significantly higher overall achievement scores on statewide achievement tests than low-fidelity schools and non-SWPBIS schools (Houchens et al., 2017). The three different tiers of SWPBIS are important because it gives schools measurable indicators to ensure that they are meeting the needs of an effective SWPBIS program. The other aspect is that it gives strong programming to schools so that they are improving and reaching the needs of all students across all three tiers.

SWPBIS is meant to provide school districts with a flexible framework to help promote positive student behavior through a reward system at all levels of a school district. The framework is moldable and allows schools to make adaptations and modifications to fit the needs of their students. The elementary level would focus on

expectations and rewards that are age appropriate. The expectations and rewards would then adjust and increase in detail as it progresses through the middle school and high school levels. SWPBIS is more popular in the elementary and middle school grade levels but is still implemented at the high school level as well (Van Otterloo, 2021). Even with more schools having an SWPBIS program at their middle school, it is still not researched as much. "Academic literature surrounding school discipline tends to focus on the elementary and high school years, leaving middle school under-researched" (Carter Andrews & Gutwein, 2020, p. 30). More research regarding successful SWPBIS middle schools and best practices is needed to help other schools develop effective approaches to properly implementing a SWPBIS program (Brouillette, 2020).

Middle School

The middle school years of a student's education is a vital time period for their overall development. The middle school years mark an important transition for students; "many educators expect them to develop the academic and social skills necessary for success in high school and beyond" (Carter Andrews & Gutwein, 2020, p. 29). Middle school is where students start to become more independent but need major support in processing their social and emotional needs. A SWPBIS program is an effective tool to ensure that students are well supported during these important years. Nocera et al. (2014) state that in a middle school environment defined by its ideal notion of student-centeredness, development of the whole child, responsiveness to the unique needs of individuals, and democratic structure, SWPBS may be an essential model for school leaders seeking the development of a true middle school (p. 1). Middle school is a pivotal time in a student's development and education during these specific years.

Students are rapidly developing and may have behavioral difficulties at this time in their life. Implementing a support system for behaviors will educate students using rewards instead of only focusing on school disciplinary practices. SWPBIS implementation is meant to be inclusive of all students. An important element of the design is to add additional layers of support through the three tiers. The other important aspect of implementing a fruitful SWPBIS program is ensuring that it meets the needs of the school.

A major issue in middle school academic literature is how it has historically not been researched as much as the elementary and high school years (Carter Andrews & Gutwein, 2020). Due to this lack of research, studies conducted at the middle school level provide educators and school leaders with insight to assist with future implementation.

A crucial component to the success of a middle school student, including the success of a SWPBIS program, is their classroom teachers. Teachers play a vital role as adult advocates in the success of students in their academic and personal development (Carter Andrews & Gutwein, 2020). Teachers spend a lot of critical time with students in middle school. Typically, teachers see their students for an average of 200 minutes per week (120 hours per year). Creating consistency during this time is important for a student's overall development. Specifically, working to positively reward students for making the right decisions has a much greater impact versus negatively disciplining them. Hence a great element of the SWPBIS approach is that schools can mold it and work on whatever behaviors or expectations are needed within their environments (Brouillette, 2020).

A key goal with the implementation of a SWPBIS program is to decrease student disciplinary issues while improving the overall quality of education. “PBIS is one approach mentioned in national legislation that effectively influences school culture and emphasizes positive behaviors rather than negative behaviors and also teaches expected behaviors to help ensure success for students” (Brouillette, 2020, p. 156). In the study by Nocera et al. (2014), one teacher indicated that the remarkable decrease in suspensions and referrals was a major factor to a more overall positive school climate and that it motivated teachers to focus on the positive accomplishments of the students. Focusing on student’s doing the right thing is what educational practice should be all about when it comes to school discipline. Everyone likes to be praised for their work and decisions. A case study by Brown (2018) found that their middle school noticed a steady decrease of disciplinary referrals since the inception of their SWPBIS program. Specifically, the middle school that Brown conducted her study in went from 634 referrals down to 228 referrals over four school years (Brown, 2018). The overall point being that a SWPBIS program works and achieves its objective of decreasing overall disciplinary issues in a school while educating students. Students are even more moldable during their middle school years. Disciplinary practices need to be focused on positivity to help educate students while creating a better school culture and climate.

A notable aspect of a middle school SWPBIS program is the improvement of the school’s overall climate and culture. Through Brown’s (2018) case study, she was able to collect data regarding the importance of a cooperative culture and climate in relation to the middle school’s SWPBIS program. Charlton et al. (2020) conclude that school climate in elementary and middle schools can be alerted by school-wide interventions,

specifically noting SWPBIS as one of the effective interventions based upon empirical support and evidence.

SWPBIS is a tool to improve a school's culture with its focus being on positivity, rewards and to curbe disciplinary issues. Developing a positive school climate and selecting effective teaching strategies should be focused on the specific needs of each individual school district, each classroom and of the particular needs of the students in these school districts and classrooms (Nocera et al., 2014). The importance of cooperation comes into play to fully implement SWPBIS and work through its three-tiered system. School leaders play an important role in the process but the overall staff must all work to integrate the elements of an SWPBIS into their classrooms and everyday practice. A multiple case study by Brouillette (2020) had an unexpected finding that at all the middle schools, "the staff-student relationship is key to building a safe and trusting place for students to learn as it contributes to a positive school culture for all (p. 126).

School leaders also play a vital role given their position as the disciplinarian from the school standpoint. An important element of discipline to keep in mind is supported by Brown (2018) who stated that "educators have varying views of these disruptions, leading to subjective consequences and outcomes" (p. 48). It is important to note for schools when implementing an SWPBIS program with fidelity. School leaders must ensure that they are being consistent in their approach to school discipline while also ensuring that their staff is working to implement the SWPBIS program focused on consistency around the school. If leaders want to see success and the results through data, they must ensure that fidelity and consistency are at the forefront of their focus.

Numerous research studies have noted that fidelity is a major factor that has a direct correlation with an effective, sustainable and data proven SWPBIS program.

Perceptions of Intervention Programs

Staff members' perceptions of a SWPBIS program are important to take into consideration when implementing a new program or working towards sustaining a current one. Staff perceptions provide school leaders and SWPBIS team members with feedback regarding the effectiveness and overall quality of their intervention program. It is imperative that the quantitative data of an effective SWPBIS program show the school staff informative results that help to guide the ongoing implementation of their program. Yet another important reason why school leaders must practice consistency when issuing a school consequence. Disciplinary data is a source to see the objective results of a SWPBIS program's effectiveness. On the other hand, qualitative data regarding staff perceptions is another main element in the overall process. Perceptions are key to include in research because even though perceptions may not be accurate, they may be reality to the stakeholders involved.

Staff Experiences

“Schoolwide positive behavior interventions and supports (SWPBIS) is a whole school prevention and intervention approach applied at the universal, targeted and intensive system levels” (Feuerborn et al., 2017, p. 101). A vital aspect of implementing an effective intervention program such as SWPBIS is ensuring that staff members involved have a positive perception of the program. “Staff support, commitment, or “buy-in” is one of the necessary variables for full, sustainable implementation of

SWPBIS” (Feuerborn et al., 2017, p. 101). The buy-in element of a SWPBIS program may seem minute but a major aspect of effectively sustaining a SWPBIS program is that it must be performed with fidelity. You cannot have fidelity if staff do not buy-in and consistently implement the program as intended.

In the study by Houchens et al. (2017), teachers indicated that managing student conduct was significantly different between high-fidelity and low-fidelity SWPBIS schools:

Teachers in high-implementation SWPBIS schools were not only more satisfied with student conduct and staff unity around the issue of student discipline, but also reported higher levels of community investment in the school and greater levels of teacher empowerment and involvement in decision making than their counterparts in low-implementation SWPBIS schools. (p. 177)

“High-fidelity SWPBIS implementation promoted positive teacher perceptions of teaching conditions on Managing Student Conduct, Community Support and Involvement and Teacher Leadership” (Houchens et al., 2017, p. 175). Fidelity of an SWPBIS program carries a lot of power to school staff and school success. However, it does not mean that there will not be difficulties in pursuing a lasting SWPBIS program.

“Teachers have been faced with an arduous task of simultaneously educating students and addressing the behavioral needs of their students” (Walter, 2020, p. 10). Given the juggling act of education, SWPBIS can be very effective but also frustrating. In the study conducted by Walter (2020), a finding was that most teachers experienced negative emotions and reactions during the initial introduction and implementation of

SWPBIS. This can be partially due to the amount of school initiatives that teachers are asked to implement and alter, while others felt overwhelmed due to the amount of information and lack of teaching experience (Walter, 2020). With any school district initiative, it can be difficult for teachers to implement due to the number of other responsibilities they have throughout a school day. SWPBIS is not a one size fits all for a school. There are going to be bumps and bruises along the way of implementation, which is why it is a program that must be focused on by all staff members with ongoing training and support.

A SWPBIS layer of administration that is highly overlooked is the importance of classified staff members. Classified staff members are members in a school building who are not teachers but hold other valuable positions supporting students. Examples of classified staff would be paraprofessionals, café workers, security staff, office staff, bus drivers and custodial crew members. Feuerborn et al. (2017) note that “classified staff commonly interact with students across grade levels, subject matter areas, and physical locations in the building” (p. 102). For a SWPBIS program to be fruitful, schools must ensure to integrate classified staff members into the execution of their SWPBIS program. A functional SWPBIS program should target issues that are in the classroom and in other parts of the school building and school day. The halls, cafeteria, restrooms and bus are other areas of the school building that are important when it comes to positively addressing student behaviors. Classified staff need to be integrated into a school’s SWPBIS program as a valued team member:

In the spirit of including all stakeholders and achieving more meaningful outcomes for students, it would benefit SWPBIS teams to communicate with

classified staff clearly and consistently, offer them quality professional development tailored to fit their needs and bring them into the fold as equal, respected partners. (Feuerborn et al., 2017, p. 112)

Sometimes we forget the value that classified members hold in a child's education and the school climate as a whole. Feuerborn et al. (2017) targets first time research with classified staff members in regards to a SWPBIS program and how "an understanding of classified staff perceptions of SWPBIS could help teams foresee and prepare for common "misses"—misunderstandings, misperceptions, and miscommunications—before they become entrenched and derail implementation" (p. 112).

School climate can be a difficult undertaking for a school to improve due to the number of obstacles that educators face each day. Specifically, school climate can be negatively affected if, and when, the stakeholders of a school develop a negative disposition for a program that is meant to help support student behaviors. Charlton et al. (2020) note that school climate impacts all stakeholders and that careful and systematic implementation of school-wide programs such as SWPBIS improves multiple domains of school climate, specifically engagement and environment. "Implementation climate may also support teachers' perceptions of SWPBIS feasibility" (Corbin et al., 2022, p. 2). The climate of a school directly impacts the confidence of teachers and classified staff when implementing new initiatives and strategies. Through the study conducted by Corbin et al. (2022), we learn that school climate can be gauged as moderate for SWPBIS implementation while still having teachers report high levels of feasibility in implementing SWPBIS. School climate does not need to be perfect or even gauged as high. Many schools looking to implement SWPBIS may be partially pursuing this

intervention as one of the strategies to satisfy the needs of its staff, in turn improving the school's climate. Knowing these aspects of climate and implementation of SWPBIS, it is important to ensure that schools review and comprehend the needs of their staff members when working towards an effective integration of SWPBIS into their schools.

There are important elements of implementation that schools must take into consideration when working towards an efficacious SWPBIS program that the staff members perceive as being high quality. According to the study by Walter (2020), most interviewees found the initial presentation and training of SWPBIS highly impactful on their ability to implement SWPBIS. A strong introduction for any program is important to set the stage and encourage a positive disposition for its integration into staff members' daily routines. Data collection is important throughout the utilization of a SWPBIS program and can also help to motivate staff members whenever there may be doubt. One participant in the qualitative study by Walter (2020) "described experiencing gratification and greater belief in SWPBIS when data provided feedback that positively reinforced her implementation efforts" (p. 19). Another participant also noted greater belief in SWPBIS from the improvements in student behaviors and achievement (Walter, 2020). Data provides the entire school with concrete evidence detailing the success of a SWPBIS program. Monthly universal rollouts with different skills or interventions help to increase understanding, knowledge and use of SWPBIS (Walter, 2020). Consistent SWPBIS check-ins and formal meetings should be a top priority for schools. The initial roll-out of a SWPBIS program is vital but the ongoing meeting structure (formal and informal) will be even more crucial for long-term success.

Concerns of Implementation

Implementing a successful and lasting SWPBIS program can be a daunting task for educators and school leaders. In a study conducted by Tyre et al. (2019), teachers were concerned about the consistent and accurate implementation of their SWPBIS program by other teachers and classified staff members. In a different study conducted by Tyre and Feuerborn (2016), a prevalent concern included skepticism that colleagues would consistently implement behavior supports. Both of these studies are examples of the importance of proper implementation of a program by school and SWPBIS leaders. The program must be a building level initiative that has a detailed plan to ensure that the SWPBIS program remains at the forefront of school goals and action steps. “Teachers may be concerned that if they are alone in implementing, particularly with respect to enforcing consequences, this may impair their relationships with students” (Tyre et al., 2019, p. 97). Ensuring that teachers and classified staff are on the same page is vital for consistency for these staff members, as well as the students. Glaring differences around the school building in an SWPBIS program can hinder the program from achieving its full effectiveness.

A negative aspect of implementing SWPBIS noted from the study by Walter (2020) described being provided a substantial amount of information within a brief amount of time and struggling to understand SWPBIS completely to appropriately implement it. Information must be presented in a way that is conducive to the busy schedule of staff members in a school building. Overwhelming staff is a quick way to lose their support in an initiative that they may already be skeptical about. Information needs to not only be organized but also be presented to staff in a way that provides them

with consistent updates and ongoing support. A major need with the implementation of SWPBIS from a staff viewpoint is the need and desire to seek out more information about SWPBIS (Walter, 2020). If staff wants to learn more about an SWPBIS program and best practices, this is positive and shows investment. On the other hand, staff members should not need to conduct their own research if the information provided by the SWPBIS team is thorough and consistent during the school year. The key is that staff should not feel as though they do not have the resources to implement an SWPBIS program. Instead, they should choose to conduct their own research due to their boost of interest in the topic.

Support and reinforcement are areas of SWPBIS that are layered since there are many needs and concerns. Higher tiers of SWPBIS are simply more difficult to implement. Tier 2 and Tier 3 are the higher levels of SWPBIS for students who are habitual with disciplinary infractions and need additional interventions. In one study, “teachers expressed concerns that universal behavioral support was working well, but more support was needed at the targeted and intensive levels” (Tyre et al., 2019, p. 97). Tier 1, the universal tier of an SWPBIS program, is effective for a large population of students but not all, this is where the importance of additional support comes into play and Tier 2 and 3 methods are warranted to address ongoing and potentially escalating negative behaviors. The other concern comes down to administration follow-up with disciplinary issues. Administration follow-up directly correlates with staff concerns since consistency is also important on the disciplinarian end.

In the study conducted by Tyre et al. (2019), “teachers were concerned that reinforcement is delivered unfairly or inappropriately among the student population” (p.

98). Students who do follow the rules can easily be overlooked. The students fly under the radar since they naturally follow the expectations set forth by the school.

Overlooking students may also lead to an issue where the positive reinforcements are not being used enough, which can be concerning if staff members are only focusing on students who typically do not follow the rules. All staff members must make a conscious effort to include all students when providing the rewards portion of the SWPBIS program.

The final level of reinforcement is the level of support garnished from the student's home. In the study conducted by Tyre et al. (2019), there was a concern involving or attaining support from parents and students identified in all five schools. Reinforcement at home for any important initiative is important, therefore SWPBIS teams must be a conscious effort to promote and involve parents and guardians as often as they can. One of the biggest indicators of a student's success starts with their upbringing and home life. Educators must be sure to tap into this invaluable asset and get parents/guardians involved as much as possible. The more parents/guardians are involved, the better the two can partner to mold students toward success.

One of the biggest indicators of the success and sustainability of a SWPBIS program is staff support. "When researchers have asked SWPBIS leaders (e.g., coaches, team facilitators, and team members) to share their perceptions of the facilitators and barriers to SWPBIS implementation, staff support has emerged as a critical factor" (Tyre & Feuerborn, 2016, p. 146). "Achieving staff support for an initiative such as SWPBIS is particularly challenging because change on a systemic level is achieved only when the majority of the staff within a school change their practices" (Tyre & Feuerborn, 2016, p.

147). The good news is that it is not typical for staff members to not want to implement a positive program like SWPBIS. SWPBIS brings a spotlight to school discipline and the most effective ways to educate and curb issues throughout a school building. In a study conducted by Tyre and Feuerborn (2016), they found that only 44 out of 1,210 staff members disagreed with the efforts of implementing SWPBIS in their schools. With the importance of staff support, knowing that SWPBIS is a program that is easily able to gain support is reassuring when working towards implementing the program at any school level.

SWPBIS and Exclusions

SWPBIS is focused on preventing problem behaviors and minimizing the use of punitive responses to inappropriate behaviors (Scherer & Ingle, 2020). Exclusions are a difficult aspect of school discipline that can have detrimental effects on students and their overall success in a school setting. “Disciplinary exclusions include an array of practices, such as office discipline referrals, in and out-of-school suspensions (OSSs), placement in an alternative setting, referral to law enforcement or juvenile justice, and expulsion, as a consequence for inappropriate or dangerous behaviors” (Grasley-Boy et al., 2019, p. 26). Exclusions are represented as being the highest level of school discipline that can be imposed to respond to negative student behaviors. The issue is that exclusions put the disciplinary measures in the hands of the parents/guardians for that specific student. By excluding a student from school, the school is basically telling the parents/guardians to step up and take ownership of their student’s behaviors due to a specific disciplinary infraction. Exclusions have not been a productive use of school discipline since most suspensions tend to occur with the same student (displaying its ineffectiveness).

“Disciplinary exclusions remain a concern and evidence continue to demonstrate potentially harmful effects from exclusion, including lower achievement and increased risk for dropping out of school” (Gage et al., 2019, p. 44). In addition to the disciplinary aspect, exclusions also create an academic learning gap due to missed instructional time. According to research by Lee et al. (2021), implementing SWPBIS with fidelity has a significant and positive impact reducing disciplinary exclusions.

Disciplinary exclusions are an ongoing concern for schools, as research demonstrates that they are associated with a multitude of detrimental outcomes such as increased risk for poor academic achievement, higher chance of school dropout, and potential issues with the juvenile justice system (Gage et al., 2019). School discipline can be a daunting task for administrators and school staff to navigate with the daily rigor of educational needs in a school building. School discipline can range from a low-level lunch detention all the way up to a school expulsion. Out-of-school suspensions (OSS) and expulsions are the most severe disciplinary exclusions as they result in the physical removal of students from their schools and have shown to have significant negative impacts on student outcomes (Gage et al., 2019). “Although school suspension, a widely used form of disciplinary exclusion, is a consequence for a behavioral incident in school (e.g., fighting, disrespect, theft), suspensions have concerning short and long-term consequences” (Gage et al., 2018, p. 217). SWPBIS is the behavioral intervention system with the highest success from school districts across America.

In the study conducted by Gage et al. (2019), they found that schools enacting the Tier 1 (universal) SWPBIS with fidelity and either Tier 2 or 3 with fidelity (Gold) or all three tiers with fidelity (Platinum) reported significantly fewer OSS than schools not

implementing SWPBIS (does not include expulsions). Through multiple resources, there have been direct correlations to schools seeing success when they apply the three tiers of SWPBIS and do so with fidelity. “Universal SWPBIS does not specifically target severe behavioral incidents and, as such, does not appear to have a substantial influence on their occurrence” (Grasley-Boy et al., 2019, p. 35). Schools implementing SWPBIS with higher levels of fidelity and utilizing more components of Tier 1, the greater the impact on behavioral incidents and overall improvement to that school’s out-of-school suspensions (Gage et al., 2018). A common theme is that SWPBIS is effective and can ultimately improve the amount of exclusions issues within a school.

Exclusions and Disabilities

“It is clear that disciplinary exclusions remain widely used in U.S. schools and that SWD receive a disproportionate share of those exclusions” (Grasley-Boy et al., 2019, p. 26). Exclusions are a part of disciplinary practices that every school employs due to different behavioral infractions performed by a wide range of students in the school setting. Out-of-school and in-school suspensions are the two main practices that schools use for higher tiered code of conduct infractions for regular education and special education students. Exclusions are meant to be the highest form of discipline that are intended to deter students from repeating unwanted behavior in the school setting. The issue is that students who have a disability are potentially more likely to be excluded from school based upon their actions and processing of their behaviors. “It may not be feasible for schools to eliminate the use of certain types of disciplinary exclusions for certain topographies of behavior (e.g., threats of extreme violence with dangerous weapons); however, not all disciplinary exclusions result from extreme behaviors”

(Grasley-Boy et al., 2019, p. 28). Schools need to find a proactive approach to supporting special education students versus excluding them from the direct instruction that they need to help close the gap on their academic achievement. SWPBIS is an intervention that can support all schools with finding strategies to address student concerns and protect the students who need the most support. School exclusions may always exist, but all schools should work towards finding alternative ways to support student behaviors throughout their K-12 education.

Disciplinary exclusions used on students with disabilities can have immediate and lasting negative effects. A student with a disability has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) to help support that student with academic and/or behavioral deficiencies. Not all students with an IEP have behavioral goals even though they may be more likely to become frustrated due to their disability. This puts a student with a disability at a higher risk of being suspended for their negative behaviors. “A student with a disability is over twice as likely to be suspended as a student without a disability” (Gage et al., 2018, p. 217). Suspending a student with a disability is difficult because that student needs as much direct instruction within the classroom to help support their learning. Exclusions only exacerbate a student’s disability since they are working to remediate the weaknesses in the subject curriculum. Schools need to be cautious since the goal with these exclusions is to eliminate negative behavior but a lot of research points directly to negative issues with academic achievement and continued behavioral infractions.

Some exclusions can also lead to a change in educational placement for students. Students with disabilities (SWD) in schools implementing SWPBIS with fidelity were significantly less often referred to alternative settings for disciplinary reasons when

compared with students with disabilities in comparison schools (Grasley-Boy et al., 2019). Alternative settings may be a necessary educational placement for students who need additional supports that the school district cannot offer. With that being said, it is also important to note that schools must take every step possible to provide students with the least restrictive environment (LRE) when meeting their individualized education plan needs. “Implementing universal SWPBIS with fidelity may in fact create environments that are predictable, with clear and consistent behavioral expectations, and provide positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior, thereby increasing the likelihood that students are engaged and meeting those school expectations and thus providing environments where all students, particularly SWD, can be successful” (Grasley-Boy et al., 2019, p. 36). Alternative education may sometimes be the only route possible in certain situations but should not be the norm for higher tiered disciplinary issues. Through the study conducted by Grasley-Boy et al. (2019), they found that “students with disabilities were statistically significantly less likely to be sent to alternative settings due to behavior in schools implementing SWPBIS with fidelity” (p. 25).

Race and Ethnicity

“Disproportionate suspension of students of color is a nationwide trend in United States public schools” (Scherer & Ingle, 2020, p. 98). “Black males are three and a half times more likely to be suspended than White students” (Gage et al., 2018, p. 217).

There has been a long-lasting issue regarding different races/ethnicities and the disciplinary inconsistencies seen in schools across the country. “Although Black students represent 31% of school arrests or referrals to law enforcement, they represent only 15% of the student population” (Baule, 2020, p. 45). “American Indian, Pacific Islander, and

multiracial populations are similarly overrepresented in law enforcement referrals and arrests” (Baule, 2020, p. 45). To target the racial discrepancies in disciplinary practice, a lot of schools are moving towards utilizing SWPBIS within their schools. A prime example of the positive effects of SWPBIS in reduction of school suspension of secondary students is the research conducted by Baule (2020) where there was a decrease in suspensions from 31% to 26% (all students), 47% to 40% (Black students), 19% to 16% (Hispanic students) and 40% to 33% (Multiracial students) in the two years since the decision to implement SWPBIS.

SWPBIS has consistently shown to directly correlate to an improvement in disciplinary exclusions of non-white students in a school setting. In the study by Baule (2020), he also noted a steady decrease in suspensions for different demographics with Asian students being the most unstable with their suspension percentages going up and down throughout the course of the study. In a study by Lee et al. (2021), they concluded statistically there were significantly fewer exclusionary discipline incidents for Black students across all but one outcome (the number of students who were arrested) between treatment groups when schools implemented an SWPBIS program. SWPBIS is not a program that is going to solve all disciplinary issues but is proven to be effective. Staff members must also employ other skills to see positive results and address any potential bias within a school setting.

The social aspect when implementing a strong SWPBIS program is another important element, especially for varying demographic groups. Teachers and school staff have a difficult task of managing their own biases when working with different demographic groups within a school setting. Perception is important but also difficult for

staff members to analyze and pinpoint if it is not on their radar as being an issue. In the study conducted by Carter Andrews and Gutwein (2020), “a majority of students interviewed felt as though they had been disciplined for no reason, were persistently targeted by their teacher, or witnessed students of color being subjected to these practices” (p. 35). Although this may not be true, perception of students and the community can have a powerful effect on what stakeholders believe is happening inside the walls of a school building. A social element that can help to connect staff members more with their student population is through the power of relationship building. “By building positive relationships with students of color, teachers may rely less on harmful stereotypes as they make disciplinary decisions” (Carter Andrews & Gutwein, 2020, p. 36).

Effectiveness and Sustainability of SWPBIS

To continue implementing a SWPBIS program, it must be effective and sustainable over a long period of time. Effectiveness of an SWPBIS program can be measured through qualitative and quantitative data. SWPBIS must be objectively effective in getting all stakeholders in a school to buy-in to the program. Fidelity is a constant word that is used throughout research conducted on SWPBIS. Research results have proven that a SWPBIS program must be carried out with fidelity to achieve the best results possible. Stakeholders can easily get behind an SWPBIS program that has positive results. Sustainability is just as important as effectiveness when it comes to SWPBIS. SWPBIS must show positive results but must also have elements that make it sustainable over a long period of time. When implementing a SWPBIS initiative, it is

important to understand its effectiveness and sustainability to ensure that it is not only successful, but also worth the investment of resources to continue to implement.

Effectiveness of SWPBIS

The effectiveness of a program is important for all stakeholders on any important initiative. Finding an effective intervention is vital for the success of a school to address negative student behaviors and potential academic issues. “When students engage in problem behaviors, they are more likely to fall through the cracks and their educational gap increases” (Van Otterloo, 2021, p. 3). The negative behaviors hinder that student’s education and potentially other students around them. “When students display inappropriate behaviors, school administrators may use a variety of consequences, including detention, in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension and expulsion” (Scherer & Ingle, 2020, p. 97). The issue now transitions to the ineffectiveness of typical historic school consequences and leads to a pattern of the same students being issued the same consequences and eventually those consequences escalating to a form of exclusion from the school day (e.g., ISS and OSS). Excluding a student from school can only expound upon any educational gap since these are typically the students that need direct instruction and teacher support. SWPBIS has been promoted as being one of the best methods to positively address student behaviors versus the various school consequences. More importantly, SWPBIS acts as a problem-solving intervention that transitions educators from a reactionary to a preventative mentality (Van Otterloo, 2021). Noltemeyer et al. (2019) define it as “a system of evidence-based supports designed to enhance all students’ prosocial behaviors and academic outcomes while promoting a positive school climate” (p. 81). An effective aspect of SWPBIS is that it targets each

and every student in the school within one of its three tiers: universal (Tier 1), selective (Tier 2), and indicated/targeted (Tier 3) meeting the individual needs of students, making it a success intervention (Van Otterloo, 2021).

Tier 1 of the SWPBIS framework is considered the universal support that is meant to provide the same level of support for all students within the school setting:

Within this tier, a school identifies three to five positively worded behavioral expectations, operationalizes what those expectations look like in various school-related settings (e.g., classroom, playground, hallway, and bus), models and teaches those expected behaviors and then consistently acknowledges those behaviors when they occur. (Noltemeyer et al., 2019, p. 81)

Tier 1 is important with the implementation of the framework because it is developed to cover all students and be the main intervention and support that will effectively address behavioral issues for the high majority. Through the research conducted by Noltemeyer et al. (2019), schools that scored greater or equal to 70% on the Tiered Fidelity Inventory (used to measure fidelity of SWPBIS program) experienced significantly fewer OSS per 100 students. As a result, this brings two important notes when discussing the effectiveness of an SWPBIS program. First and foremost, schools must implement the SWPBIS program with fidelity if they want to receive the benefits of the intervention program. Lastly, the Tier 1 interventions in an SWPBIS program are effective even though they provide a universal approach without the additional layers of intervention found in Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports. Overall, this once again links the importance of SWPBIS being implemented with fidelity to ensure it can be successful.

A second-tier intervention that was found to be highly effective is the check-in check-out (CICO) system that is used to target specific students for an additional layer of intervention. The CICO system is more targeted and does require more footwork on behalf of the SWPBIS team. CICO is a system that is created with a staff member (mentor) along with the student to set goals based upon specific behaviors and clear expectations. The student can earn points per period given to them by their classroom teacher. The system requires a daily check-in first thing in the morning with their mentor. The student must submit their CICO sheet at the beginning of each class period and the classroom teacher will provide direct feedback to the student on the sheet along with a score on how they performed. That student will then check-out later on with their mentor as a way to review and reflect on their day using their CICO sheet. Rewards are typically agreed upon at the beginning of the process and can be something daily or weekly. Tier 2 and 3 are what make SWPBIS an even more effective discipline prevention framework. Tier 1 has been proven to be effective for the high majority of students and the additional layer of a Tier 2 intervention is able to address more difficult and consistent student behaviors. Even with tiered interventions, it is important to note that staff members still must put in major footwork to connect and bond with their students.

A major component of the successful implementation that contributes to the effectiveness of SWPBIS is the value of positive relationships. Through research conducted by Van Otterloo (2021), a common theme was found regarding proper implementation of SWPBIS. It is key for staff and students to be more engaged and motivated, moreover, positive relationships were found to be essential. Establishing

positive relationships is an aspect of leadership that can easily be overlooked. The more that an educator can connect with their students, the more they will be able to get out of that student in both academic achievement and behavioral success. SWPBIS is an approach that has a heavy focus on positive and ongoing relationships. Staff members must invest time in getting to know their students and finding common ways to connect with them. Putting in valuable time to get to know students will pay dividends but there may be bumps and bruises along the way.

Potential downfalls of SWPBIS are a real issue that schools may run into. It is important to note that there will be issues with implementation that can lead to a failed intervention program. Even with the success of overall SWPBIS, schools may not always have the same results as successful SWPBIS schools. For example, in the study conducted by Scherer and Ingle (2020), there were various discrepancies found in their research. An example would be an increase in office disciplinary referrals from year 2 to year 3 (after a very successful first year decrease) (Scherer & Ingle, 2020). Schools must take the time to establish a system of check-ins to ensure that important features of SWPBIS are being implemented across the school. Van Otterloo (2021) found that ownership and buy-in were important for the success of an SWPBIS program, and accomplishing these two tasks could lead to a more meaningful and lasting change. Establishing ownership and buy-in is not an easy feat. School leaders must work closely with the SWPBIS team and overall staff to, not only ensure priority is set to the same importance of the intervention program, but also that the sharing of results is achieved through hard work.

Sustaining SWPBIS

Sustainability of SWPBIS is an important concept to study considering the amount of time and resources it takes to implement an effective program. A vital aspect of any important initiative is that it must be sustainable over time. The effort and time put in must also equate to the ability to be sustained school year after school year. “Implementing systems-level school-based practices with fidelity requires a considerable amount of resources (e.g., time, external support)” (Mercer et al., 2012, p. 294). To sustain SWPBIS, school stakeholders must know that it is effective and that the school is willing to invest in its ongoing implementation. In the study conducted by Mercer et al. (2012), they found that these factors— “School Priority, Team Use of Data, District Priority, and Capacity Building—were strongly correlated and significantly related to sustained implementation” (p. 305).

“Priority acts on sustainability by increasing the likelihood that school personnel will engage in implementation activities instead of competing tasks” (Mercer et al., 2012, p. 294). Priority is one important factor that school districts must take into consideration whenever planning for long-term effective implementation of a SWPBIS program. School districts must stake value in a SWPBIS program and make it an initiative, consistently reviewing and implementing annually to follow up and improve fidelity of the program, action steps must be taken. Staff commitment is the priority that represents the buy-in of school personnel due to the underlying assumptions of the practice, and its ongoing implementation. Coffey and Horner (2012) note that “teacher buy-in and commitment was the next most frequently reported factor leading to sustainability; two of the respondents stated that better than expected outcomes in the first year led to increased

teacher commitment” (p. 417). When a school prioritizes its SWPBIS program, it sends a clear message to the staff that it is important and worth investing time in. An ongoing issue in school districts is the constant change of initiatives. By making SWPBIS a prime initiative with investment of time and resources, it will increase staff buy-in and also improve fidelity over its years of implementation.

“Administrative support is needed from the initial stages of implementation through sustainment of a PBIS program” (Dunbar, 2020, p. 73). A factor that is noted throughout various articles, researching the sustainability of an effective SWPBIS program, is the ongoing support of the administrative team. In the study conducted by Coffey and Horner (2012), they found that the largest number of their respondents named leadership as the number one factor that helped sustain their SWPBIS program. As the leader of the building, the principal must set the tone for the important initiatives that are implemented in their school. SWPBIS is a program that is demanding, not only of the SWPBIS team, but the school staff as a whole. Once the program is up and running, it is not difficult to sustain, but ongoing support from the main school leader is essential to its success. If the principal does not garnish buy-in and promote the SWPBIS program, it will end up falling through the cracks as another initiative that will just go away after a year or two. School leaders must be sure to invest time and energy into promoting and educating their staff to ensure that all school members are on board, in addition to implementing the program with fidelity. Dunbar (2020) states that “the support of the administrative staff indicates the practice serves as a critical need and their commitment to the sustainment of PBIS will be supported” (p. 73). “In terms of district support, one respondent explained that "central office support and the message that SWPBIS is

important and an expectation for schools" led to sustainability" (Coffey & Horner, 2012, p. 417).

Resources are also an important component to the sustainability of a SWPBIS program. Time is a resource that leadership and staff must be willing to invest. Most of the time spent on a SWPBIS program will be in the initial phase, when first implementing the program. Once the program is up and running, there are routine meetings and check-ins that must occur. Aside from that, the program does not require a ton of staff hours once it is fully operational. Rewards on the other hand are a resource that can end up becoming a difficult challenge on various levels. Typically, a SWPBIS program implements smaller weekly rewards that are meant to cover a vast number of students. The next layer to that is usually a monthly or quarterly larger reward to help motivate students to maintain a constant focus towards achieving a higher level of a reward. Both resources can end up becoming the difficult part of implementing and sustaining an effective SWPBIS program if not implemented consistently.

Dunbar (2020) found valuable information from his staff interviews during his qualitative research:

It is hard to sustain without there being incentives. And we've been lucky because we've been able to receive donations, and we've been able to use school funds. But it is hard when it is a mandate from the city, but there's not a place in the budget to kind of fund the incentives or you got to be really, really, really creative. And then it becomes a little taxing on the faculty and the parents who are used to giving, giving, and giving. (p. 74)

Many SWPBIS programs are funded primarily through donations, which can create a sustainability problem. Initially, staff and community stakeholders are excited and have no problem providing donations to help support the positive cause. If a school wants to sustain an SWPBIS program, it will eventually need to not only be an important initiative for the school, but also a line item in the budget.

“Consistency within the application of school-wide expectations is essential to sustainability of PBIS and it creates a cohesive school environment” (Dunbar, 2020, p. 71). Consistency is a key factor when it comes to sustaining SWPBIS. In the study conducted by Dunbar (2020), he notes that “one hundred percent of the participants expressed the importance of establishing and utilizing school-wide expectations on a consistent basis” (p. 71). Stability is important across all levels when it comes to all the important elements of SWPBIS. Administration needs to be uniform when it comes to expectations and important SWPBIS follow-ups/check-ins. SWPBIS needs to remain an important topic at the school to ensure that it does not fall by the wayside. The program also needs to provide staff with updates and professional development.

Participants in the research study by Dunbar (2020) all agreed that continuous training was an essential component to SWPBIS sustainability. This area of SWPBIS can be easy to overlook in the grand scheme of what occurs throughout a school year. Meetings and training must be built into the calendar to ensure that all parties are following up with the needs of the SWPBIS program. This ensures that all staff have appropriate training and information. When school leaders are creating their educational plans and goals for the year, they should be sure to include SWPBIS in the equation. Preplanning is an important aspect to executing an SWPBIS with long-term sustainability

being the focus. Continuous professional development opportunities should be built into the school calendar along with data driven updates. Another area of importance is ensuring that new staff members are trained and an onboarding plan is created due to the turnover of staff. A staff interview from Dunbar (2020) expresses the challenges regarding staff turnover:

The turnover of staff is really challenging because you'll have teachers that are in the fifth year of implementation and they are a powerhouse. They, they can walk it, they can talk it, the kids can feel it. But then you have your new staff members that, you know, they've heard the term, but they're on such a different level that it makes it harder for them to implement because when they're focused on learning how to teach. (p. 65)

Data is the final component to solidifying the sustainability of a SWPBIS program and providing staff with concrete measurables to continue sustaining an effective program. "Incorporating data into decision making requires both regular collection of implementation and outcomes data and using those data to enhance and adapt implementation" (Mercer et al., 2012, p. 296). Dunbar (2020) found that during his research interview process, "all participants stressed the importance of using data to guide decision making" (p. 75). Data provides all staff members with the ultimate evidence and feedback on how an SWPBIS is performing. Considering the amount of time and resources an SWPBIS can cost, it is important that staff members fully buy-in to the program. You can only "sell" a program so much until staff need to see the fruits of their labor in data results. "Regular use of data may result in administrators and staff

having more accurate and timely feedback, which more closely connects the desired outcomes to the implementation activities” (Coffey & Horner, 2012, p. 416).

Aside from disciplinary data, schools can also use the School-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET) specifically to assess their SWPBIS program. Using the SET, “an external reviewer administers the 28-item research tool on site by reviewing materials that relate to SWPBIS, performing observations and conducting staff and student interviews” (Coffey & Horner, 2012, p. 411). The SET has seven subscales that measure the important aspects of SWPBIS that are as follows: behavior expectations defined, behavior expectations taught, ongoing behavior reward system, system for responding to behavior violations, monitoring and decision making, management and district-level support (Coffey & Horner, 2012). With data being important to the decision-making process, the SET provides all staff members with concrete evidence on the effectiveness and sustainability of their SWPBIS program.

Summary

Schools across America are seeking new and improved ways to manage student discipline. SWPBIS has been proven through years of implementation and research to be a successful intervention system to proactively and effectively manage negative student behaviors through a tiered system of supports. SWPBIS is an effective framework due to it having a base system (Tier 1) which is universal for all students across an entire school building. In addition, SWPBIS also offers more supports through Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions to focus on students who need additional help for ongoing behavioral issues.

Middle school specifically is an interesting time for young teenagers due to the transitional period in their educational and social lives. Students are given more freedom and responsibility during this phase which is a huge change from the high structure of an elementary school. Consequently, this in conjunction with a hormonal and social change, makes middle school grade levels a pivotal point for students.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

“More research is needed to describe the best practices that are being utilized in highly successful PBIS middle schools to help other schools develop effective approaches to implementation” (Brouillette, 2020, p. 13). The review of literature contained a wide range of research that gave a well-rounded view of the importance of SWPBIS and the value of its exploration. The literature regarding best practices and SWPBIS set the background to give context to its importance in school districts. Qualitative data was integrated through literature on staff perceptions of intervention programs, and concerns noted in other research. Literature regarding quantitative data was valuable to better understand how SWPBIS and exclusions have been reviewed. To ensure that the time to implement a SWPBIS program is worth the effort, effectiveness and sustainability literature provided vital research to the importance of pursuing this mixed methods research project. The review of literature has established a clear rationale for the researcher to implement a mixed methods research study to focus on the importance of a School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) program at the middle school level.

This research study utilized mixed methods to analyze staff perceptions and school discipline, specifically out-of-school suspensions (OSS), to determine the effectiveness of the SWPBIS program at the middle school. The short-term action research study provides invaluable insight to school leaders. Due to the mixed methods data collection reviewing the effectiveness of SWPBIS on school exclusions (OSS), in

conjunction with the staff perceptions of the SWPBIS program effectiveness reviewing the 2021-2022 school year in comparison with the 2022-2023 school year.

This chapter will begin by focusing on the purpose of the research study, including the specific research questions established to execute this research study. Research context will be established through the setting and participants involved in the research study. The research plan will help to connect the review of literature with the methodology of the SWPBIS research. The research design, methods and data collection will be an important section to specifically detail each important element when conducting the research. Validity will conclude the methodology section and help to provide detail on the accuracy of the research methods and how the data is compiled from multiple sources to support a fully comprehensive doctoral capstone research project.

The review of literature provided detailed context utilizing the research and results from previous studies focused on SWPBIS programs at the middle school level. The review of literature began with researching SWPBIS programs, best practices and the middle school level, which provides the researcher with a better understanding of effective SWPBIS programs and supportive research focused on the same grade levels. “PBIS is one approach mentioned in national legislation that effectively influences school culture and emphasizes positive behaviors rather than negative behaviors and also teaches expected behaviors to help ensure success for students” (Brouillette, 2020, p. 156). Gaining an understanding of these areas through literature gives the researcher an improved viewpoint on the importance of SWPBIS research targeting the middle school level.

Perceptions of intervention programs is an important research topic to better understand how school staff recognize a SWPBIS program. “Staff support, commitment, or “buy-in” is one of the necessary variables for full, sustainable implementation of SWPBIS” (Feuerborn et al., 2017, p. 101). It is important to understand the proper way of implementing a SWPBIS program and ensure staff members are a part of the process. “Teachers may be concerned that if they are alone in implementing, particularly with respect to enforcing consequences, this may impair their relationships with students” (Tyre et al., 2019, p. 97). The researcher must understand the positive experiences of students/staff and also concerns through previous educational research. The importance of this is exemplified through the study conducted by Tyre and Feuerborn (2016) noting the staff perceptions and staff opposition regarding a SWPBIS program.

Developing an understanding of the relationship between SWPBIS and exclusions is important to this research since the goal should be to positively address discipline and minimize the amount of lost instructional time due to OSS. SWPBIS is focused on preventing problem behaviors and minimizing the use of punitive responses to inappropriate behaviors (Scherer & Ingle, 2020). Some exclusions need to be given extra attention due to it being students with disabilities and/or minorities who may have the highest need for educational support and suffer from potential equity issues. The middle school has a diverse population of students and in turn SWPBIS in relation to exclusions serves as an important element for schools to ensure that all avenues of interventions are thoroughly considered and reviewed.

Finally, a SWPBIS program must produce results displaying its effectiveness and sustainability over a period of time. Mercer et al. (2012) conducted research that directly noted school priority, team use of data, school team support and SWPBIS resource focus were the main factors that promoted effectiveness and sustainability of a SWPBIS program. Expected results are that the school experiences a decrease in the number of disciplinary issues and that staff morale increases. To achieve this, schools must be consistent in their approach to implementing a SWPBIS program. “Consistency within the application of school-wide expectations is essential to sustainability of PBIS and it creates a cohesive school environment” (Dunbar, 2020, p. 71). Reviewing literature in relation to sustainability and effectiveness directly correlates to this research and the importance of the data this research will provide to the stakeholders of the middle school and other schools with an interest in a SWPBIS program.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to research staff perceptions in conjunction with OSS disciplinary data focused on the suburban middle school’s SWPBIS program called PRIDE. The SWPBIS program has served the middle school as a valuable school building initiative focused on improving school discipline and the culture of the school. One important element that the SWPBIS program focused on is the improvement of the exclusionary disciplinary practices, more specifically, out-of-school suspensions. The school has experienced a high number of disciplinary infractions that have caused the days of OSS to spike to a very high number, which equates to more students missing school and potentially a domino effect of students displaying more negative behaviors

due to their loss of educational time. Another focus of the SWPBIS is to improve the culture of the school, focusing on the staff members of the middle school. When there is a high amount of discipline occurrences, this tends to negatively impact staff members and their perceptions of a school and its programs. The researcher will collect specific qualitative data to better understand the staff perceptions of the SWPBIS program. Both disciplinary and perception data will provide clear feedback regarding the effectiveness of the SWPBIS program on improving the number of OSS and how the staff members perceive the SWPBIS program. The outcomes from this research will be invaluable for the middle school and any other school that may be working to implement an effective and sustainable SWPBIS program with fidelity.

The research conducted will be unique since the program suffered a hiatus and was not implemented during the end of the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years. The SWPBIS program was reintegrated during the 2021-2022 school year, which will provide data resembling a brand-new program due to the interruption from the COVID-19 pandemic. The initial data will be compared against qualitative and quantitative data that was collected during the 2022-2023 school year, which will mark the intervention program's second year back into practice after the pandemic. To fully understand the impact that the SWPBIS program had on staff perceptions and student behaviors, the researcher developed the following three research questions.

1. How does the current School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) program impact student behaviors reviewing rewards?

2. What impact does the SWPBIS program have on the number of out-of-school suspensions (OSS)?
3. What is the middle school staff's perception of the effectiveness of the SWPBIS program from year one to year two of implementation?

The first research question focuses on the SWPBIS program by reviewing the number of students receiving awards in conjunction with the total number of OSS. Qualitative research data from the staff interviews will also be important to understanding staff perceptions in relation to the quantitative data of rewards and OSS data. The second research question targets the effectiveness of the SWPBIS program reviewing OSS data and SWPBIS data in the form of the School-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET) and the School-Wide Benchmarks of Quality Scoring Form. Finally, the third question fully focuses on qualitative data and the middle school staff's perception of the effectiveness of the program. A survey using the Likert scale and one-on-one interviews will be utilized to answer the effectiveness of the program comparing the 2021-2022 school year with the 2022-2023 school year.

Setting

This doctoral research study was conducted at a suburban middle school in Western Pennsylvania which is the only middle school in the school district. During the 2021-2022 school year, the school was comprised of around 2,279 students from five different boroughs. The school district is approximately 25.59 square miles and is located in Western Pennsylvania. Demographically, the school district's main race/ethnicity enrollment during the 2021-2022 school year are white students at 71.2%. Other

race/ethnicities within the school district are 17.1% black, 7.6% 2 or more races, 3.4% Hispanic and 0.7% Asian students. The school district has five total schools spread out across the school district (three elementary schools, one middle school and one high school). There are around 66 total students that are enrolled in the local career and technology center. The approximate number of charter school enrollment is around 444 students. The enrollment by student groups for the school district is 52.4% economically disadvantaged, 20.1% special education, 3.3% homeless, 1.9% English Language Learner (ELL), 1.2% military connected and 0.6% foster care (Future Ready PA Index, 2023).

The researched middle school was historically a junior high school educating students in grades 7-8. During the 2018-2019 school year, there was a transition that added 6th grade to the school building and changed the school from a junior high to a middle school designation. The middle school is a Title I School that is comprised of around 509 students. The school has a current (2021-2022) demographic breakdown of 71.3% white, 18.1% black, 6.1% 2 or more races, 3.9% Hispanic and 0.6% Asian students. The enrollment by students' group is 52.5% economically disadvantaged, 21.4% special education, 3.7% homeless, 1.8% ELL, 1.2% military connected and 0.4% foster care (Future Ready PA Index, 2023).

Participants

The participants in this research study were teachers at the middle school. All staff members at the middle school were invited to participate in this research study but only teachers volunteered. The researcher wanted to include all staff members to ensure that the perceptions of various positions at the middle school were a part of the data. In

the end, a total of 13 teachers volunteered to participate with approximately 50 staff members invited to partake in the research study. Participating in the research was a mixture of teachers specializing in different content areas. The experience of the teachers ranged from teachers new to the education field and a blend of teachers with over 20 years of teaching experience (Table 1).

Table 1

Years of Experience

Teacher	Years of Experience (range)
Teacher 1	21+
Teacher 2	16-20
Teacher 3	16-20
Teacher 4	21+
Teacher 5	16-20
Teacher 6	21+
Teacher 7	21+
Teacher 8	11-15
Teacher 9	16-20
Teacher 10	0-5
Teacher 11	21+
Teacher 12	11-15
Teacher 13	21+

With the reintegration of the SWPBIS PRIDE program at the middle school, there were teachers involved in the study who had varying degrees of their involvement as a SWPBIS team member. Some of the teachers were teacher leaders who had an integral role with the implementation of the program, while others were active participants in only implementing the program within their classrooms. Due to the use of human subjects, the research met Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval in advance (Appendix B). All participants in this study were also given a consent letter that they completed and returned to the researcher (Appendix C). The consent letter provided the volunteer with

vital information regarding their expectations during the research study with a notation that they could quit at any point without penalty. The overall goal was also noted, so that the volunteers knew the focus of the research.

Intervention and Research Plan

School discipline has been a hot and contentious topic in schools for a multitude of years. Discipline typically is a controversial subject that causes a host of problems in school districts with school stakeholders having differing views. Brouillette (2020) stated that “students at one school can be disciplined more harshly than students at another school for the same offense” (p. 20). Carter Andrews and Gutwein (2020) also note that school discipline research tends to focus on the elementary and high school years but leaves the middle school level under-researched. Brouillette (2020) conducted research showing that SWPBIS programs have been implemented and researched in middle schools successfully. Due to the researched effectiveness of improving school discipline and culture, SWPBIS program exploration has been executed thoroughly focusing on different data points (qualitative and quantitative). There is research that has been conducted at the middle school level, but SWPBIS middle school research has been noted as being a need with more SWPBIS research being conducted at the elementary level (Brouillette, 2020). This is due to the fact that SWPBIS programs at the elementary level are far more prevalent than programs being implemented at the secondary level (Coffey & Horner, 2012). Therefore, there is more research regarding elementary SWPBIS programs and a higher need for SWPBIS research at the secondary school level.

What makes this study special is that there is not much focused research to pinpoint an early SWPBIS implementation reviewing the effectiveness of a program comparing the exclusionary data (OSS) and the perceptions of staff members in a middle school building. This research study is unique since the SWPBIS program was reimplemented after the COVID-19 shutdown during a time period when mental/emotional health were in a very fragile state due to negative effects of the pandemic. The research conducted in this study compared initial data during the 2021-2022 school year with data accumulated during the second year of the SWPBIS programs reintegration during the 2022-2023 school year. The quantitative data points were SWPBIS rewards data, out-of-school suspension data, SET data and School-Wide Benchmarks of Quality Scoring Form data. The qualitative data gathered was in the form of staff surveys and one-on-one staff interviews. The staff surveys compared teacher perception data from the 2021-2022 school year with the same survey data during the 2022-2023 school year. The one-on-one interviews only compiled data from the teachers volunteering during the 2022-2023 school year.

During the 2019-2020 school year, the middle school implemented a brand new SWPBIS program called PRIDE. The program was developed with the support of the Watson Institute through a grant/donors and was implemented by middle school administration, head teachers and a SWPBIS team of the middle school staff members. The SWPBIS team began the planning process during the 2018-2019 school year and the summer leading up to the 2019-2020 school year. March of 2020 is when the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown schools everywhere and put a halt to the middle school's SWPBIS

program. The SWPBIS program was not active during the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year nor the 2020-2021 school year due to virtual format of learning.

The disciplinary process at the middle school utilizes a specific set of supports/interventions which directly reflects the goals of the SWPBIS program. The program rewards were specifically focused on motivating middle school aged students with a high number of rewards from the support of the local community. The program started with a ticket system for weekly rewards and a punch card system for long-term (nine week) larger rewards. The ticket system allowed students to enter a drawing where they could earn gift cards donated by local businesses and school district stakeholders (one student per grade level, per week). The punch card reward was in the form of a SWPBIS field trip that allowed students to obtain punches on their punch card, which would eventually be turned in to attend the SWPBIS field trip reward at the end of each nine weeks.

During the 2021-2022 school year, the SWPBIS program was reimplemented during the reintroduction back to “normal” educational practices. During this school year, the program transitioned from a ticket system with weekly rewards to a school store where students could purchase snacks and other small rewards with their PRIDE tickets. The nine-week larger rewards also transitioned where students could purchase a field trip ticket with a specific number of PRIDE tickets. The store started as a weekly occurrence in the middle school lobby and then transitioned to the middle school head teachers implementing a traveling reward store every Friday during homeroom/advisory. During the 2022-2023 school year, the SWPBIS once again updated and improved its rewards

practices. PRIDE tickets were no longer utilized, but instead students were issued PRIDE cards and teachers were all issued different PRIDE stampers. Students would earn stamps on their cards and then could purchase items at the PRIDE store based upon the number of stamps earned. The PRIDE store was student operated out of a small storage closet and included upgrades to the different types of rewards due to an increase in money raised through school dances and community donations. To earn stamps, students had to meet the expectations of the PRIDE matrix (Appendix A). The matrix breakdown for PRIDE is Productive, Respect, Integrity, Determination and Excellence. Each of these words have a rules and expectations description for the various areas around a school building that a student encounters throughout their day. Specifically, there are seven areas that PRIDE focuses on in the school building which are classroom, hallway, cafeteria, restroom, bus, office and assembly. Students could earn PRIDE stamps from any of these areas of the building by meeting the rules and expectations per area. Teachers were also given flexibility and could use the PRIDE stamps to motivate and reward students in their classroom for meeting more specific goals.

Fiscally, the SWPBIS program at the middle school is unique in comparison to other programs implemented at the school. The school district does not cover any of the expenses related to the implementation of the SWPBIS program. The program itself does not cost the district any additional funding or grants. The money given to the SWPBIS program is 100% donated to the school, which includes the services received from the Watson Institute. The Watson Institute is comprised of four locations in the Pittsburgh area with each location having a different focus on supporting the needs of special education students. The Watson Institute also offers several other supports, including

behavioral health services which encompasses several different services. The SWPBIS team at the middle school works with a Watson Institute consultant who specializes in supporting schools with their SWPBIS program. With the support of the Watson Institute, the benefit of the SWPBIS program is targeted to improve and promote positive student behaviors without money being an issue or focus. The data collection for the SWPBIS program itself was conducted through the university's Microsoft account. The collection of surveys, documents and other data was all through Microsoft products including Microsoft OneDrive, Word and Forms. Microsoft Forms was the program used to create and collect the data for the surveys sent to the research volunteers. In turn, there is no cost to implement the SWPBIS program or conduct the research minus the time spent to collect the data and complete the doctoral research project.

Research Design, Methods & Data Collection

The Impact of School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) Focusing on Staff Perceptions and Student Behaviors capstone project will be an action research study using a mixed methods research design. The mixed methods methodology allows the study to combine valuable qualitative and quantitative data to effectively measure the true impact of the middle school's SWPBIS program. The research conducted has an importance in that it meets the standards of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and was approved by the Pennsylvania Western University Institutional Review Board officially on August 4, 2022 (Appendix B).

The quantitative data for the study was in the form of SWPBIS rewards data, discipline data (OSS) and SWPBIS rubric data (SET midyear and School-Wide Benchmarks of Quality Scoring Form). The discipline data was accumulated from the

school district's student information system, Tyler. The OSS data for 2021-2022 school year was collected in August of 2022 and the OSS data for the 2022-2023 was collected in March of 2023. The OSS data collection was focused on compiling consistent data up to the point of the third quarter each school year, so that the comparison of data was equivalent. The study specifically analyzed OSS rates for students since that is a major focus and need for improvement within the middle school. The OSS data was represented as a total, but also broken down by one-day suspensions, two-day suspensions, three-day suspensions and ten-day suspensions.

To analyze the OSS data, the researcher used the ordinal scales method and created a table with each school year that included the four different levels of suspensions. To appropriately total up the accurate number of OSS days, the researcher had to also incorporate ½-day OSS, 4-day OSS and 5-day OSS to accommodate for OSS days issued during the 2022-2023 school year even though these increments of OSS were not utilized during the 2021-2022 school year. The OSS breakdown for each school year was then visible and the differences with suspensions per school year was much easier to pinpoint. The goal with the OSS data was to compare the total number of suspensions and suspension days from the 2021-2022 school year with the 2022-2023 school year, specially reviewing the first 135 school days (beginning of the year up to the end of the 3rd 9 weeks). The data was totaled and ranked to see the total number of times an OSS was issued and the total number of OSS days that were issued. By analyzing the OSS data following the ordinal scales concept, the researcher was able to rank the data each school year from the highest number of suspensions focusing on the four different levels of suspensions (one-day, two-day, three-day and ten-day). This data was reviewed to be

able to compare the level of OSS between the two school years. For example, ten-day suspensions would mean that higher infractions occurred when comparing that to the number of one-day suspensions.

Other quantitative data was collected in the form of SWPBIS specific data. The SWPBIS rewards data provides an overview of the month and the number of rewards received. Rewards included in this SWPBIS study are snack bags, candy, mystery prize, dance tickets and field trip ticket. As an important note, there was an influx of new rewards implemented during the 2022-2023 school year. The rewards data for the 2021-2022 school year was collected in August of 2022 and the rewards data from 2022-2023 was collected in March of 2023. The data for each school year was reviewed looking at the rewards data from the beginning of the school year until the end of March for consistency purposes.

The first step to analyze the rewards data was to integrate each excel spreadsheet onto a singular table to compare the results from the 2021-2022 school year with the 2022-2023 school year. During the 2022-2023 school year, the SWPBIS team collected feedback from students to help provide students with rewards that were more in line with their preferences. However, this did not impact the study since the goal with the rewards data was to review the total number of rewards from the beginning of the school year, up until the end of March during both the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year. After totaling the number of rewards per school year, the data was then organized following the ordinal scales process, ranking the school year based upon the number of rewards received. The data was useful because it provided two years' worth of rewards data that also provided the action research study with improvements made to the reward system.

The SWPBIS rubric data came from the School-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET) data and the School-Wide Benchmarks of Quality Scoring Form. The SET data was collected and analyzed by the consultant from the Watson Institute during the 2021-2022 school year in November 2021 (data collected August 2022). The SET during the 2022-2023 school year was completed and collected January 2023. The SET form is comprised of seven feature categories that vary in the amount of evaluation questions. The feature categories are Expectations Defined, Behavioral Expectations Taught, On-going System for Rewarding Behavioral Expectations, Systems for Responding to Behavioral Violations, Monitoring & Decision-making, Management and District-level Support. Data source is noted per question to determine what source was used for the evaluation question. Product, interview and observation were the three data sources indicated per question using the first letter of each word on the SET document. The score per evaluation question is 0-2. Ordinal scales were once again used but this time the higher score was highlighted to signify rank per feature question. A final spreadsheet was completed comparing the score in each feature category (0-2) and then finally the summary scores were compiled to an overall mean score for the middle school SET.

The score per question on the SET has a different representation noted directly on the SET form. Some of the scores represent a word response, while others represent a response that is percentage based. For example, on question one from section A. Expectations Defined, *“Is there documentation that staff has agreed to 5 or fewer positively stated school rules/behavior expectations?”* the 0 represented no, 1 represented too many/negatively focused and 2 represented yes. On question two from section B. Behavioral Expectations Taught, *“Do 90% of the staff asked state that teaching of*

behavioral expectations to students has occurred this year?" the 0 represented 0-50%, the 1 represented 51%-89% and the 2 represented 90%-100%.

The School-Wide Benchmarks of Quality Scoring Form was also completed by the consultant from the Watson Institute during the 2021-2022 school year in March 2022 (data collected August 2022). The School-Wide Benchmarks of Quality Scoring Form during the 2022-2023 school year was completed and collected in April 2023. The form contains three total steps when analyzing a SWPBIS program. Step one is the consultant using the scoring guide to determine the appropriate point value per question. Step two indicates the team's most frequent response which includes in place, needs improvement and not in place (if there is a tie, the higher score gets reported). Step three is where a check mark is placed for any discrepancy between the consultant's rating and the team's rating. There are a total of ten critical elements that are scored reviewing the SWPBIS team's most frequent response. The ten critical elements are PBIS Team, Faculty Commitment, Effective Procedures for Dealing with Discipline, Data Entry & Analysis Plan Established, Expectations & Rules Developed, Reward/Recognition Program Established, Lesson Plan for Teaching Expectations/Rules, Implementation Plan, Classroom Systems and Evaluation. The scoring form also incorporates an area where areas of strength and areas in need of development are noted.

The School-Wide Benchmarks of Quality Scoring Forms were analyzed by compiling the results onto a table for side-by-side comparison purposes. First, the team score and coach score were accounted for to compare each school year's score by the SWPBIS team and the consultant from the Watson Institute. Starting with the end in mind allowed the researcher to have an immediate idea on where the results finished in

both the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year. Next, each critical element section was incorporated onto the table to compare each of the three steps. Notes were taken after the review of each section to better understand how each school year's data from the form correlated and differed. The team summary was the final section to be reviewed with the areas of discrepancy, strength and need of development compared from both the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year. A descriptive narrative was used for the final section to compare the results from each section.

The qualitative data for the study was in the form of a SWPBIS Staff Perceptions Survey (Appendix D) and a SWPBIS Staff Interview (Appendix E). The goal of the SWPBIS Staff Perceptions Survey was to collect valuable data regarding the middle school staff perceptions of the SWPBIS program. There was a staff survey completed in November of 2022 that was focused on responses from the 2021-2022 school year. Teachers answered a total of 14 questions regarding their perceptions of the previous school year. Out of the 14 questions asked, 13 of them were multiple choice with the last question (question 14) being open-ended. The same exact staff survey was completed in March of 2023 with the focus being on the current 2022-2023 school year. To give an example, multiple-choice sample question number 9 from the SWPBIS Staff Perceptions Survey stated, *"I have seen a difference in student behavior whenever I implement the reward portion of the SWPBIS program."* Staff members had to circle strongly disagree, disagree, agree or strongly agree. Another example from the SWPBIS Staff Perceptions Survey was the only open-ended question, question number 14. This question asked, *"What do you believe can be done to better implement the school's SWPBIS?"* For this question, staff members provided a response using 2-3 sentences on the Microsoft Form.

This question was the final question of the survey and gave staff members an opportunity to provide a more elaborate response with the initial questions all being multiple-choice.

The responses from the 13 participants on the SWPBIS Staff Perceptions Survey were accumulated on a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet through Microsoft Forms. The responses from the first survey were organized by collecting the responses per participant. The results were anonymous with only a few potential descriptive factors for each volunteer. Grade level, teaching/supporting content area, years of education experience and gender were the survey questions that focused on demographics. Analyzing data began with the researcher creating a codebook directly on Microsoft Excel, using the results from both surveys. The researcher then used frequency distribution when analyzing the survey data from the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years. The results from the frequency distribution provided data that was easy to compare from each school year. Notes were taken while analyzing the results to account for any notable finding. The final question to be analyzed through a descriptive narrative was the open-ended question, number 13, *“What do you believe can be done to better implement the school’s SWPBIS?”* This question gave the most understanding on how that participant felt about the program and potential improvements to help with its success. Survey questions 6-14 were used to answer the third research question of the action research study. A separate tab was used on the survey data spreadsheet to pinpoint these survey questions for comparison purposes.

The SWPBIS Staff Interview provided one-on-one interviews that added another layer of qualitative data. The interview included questions that helped to triangulate the qualitative data that ensured the staff had a voice in the research study. The staff

interview was comprised of a total of six interview questions in the form of a semi-structured interview. The semi-structured interview allowed the researcher to use the six questions as a base and then provide additional follow-up questions based upon the information given, which gave the researcher flexibility to ensure that appropriate detail was accumulated in the process. Notes and a recording of the interview were used during the staff interviews to ensure that the information collected accurately depicted the information from the interviewee. During the interview, the researcher would make a mark in the notes of a question to indicate that reviewing the recording for that question would be needed. After each interview, the researcher went back through the recordings to finalize the notes for each research participant. The recordings played a valuable role in the study, so that the researcher was able to continue the interview with each participant without having to stop or slow down the interview to finish notes.

Analyzing the SWPBIS Staff Interviews began with compiling all the interviewee's responses onto a singular Microsoft Word document. The researcher then reviewed the responses and highlighted key words and phrases. Using different highlight colors, the researcher created themes with common responses from the different interview questions. Questions 3-6 of the interview were separated and analyzed to help answer the first research question. Questions 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 were also separated and analyzed to help answer the third research question.

The staff interviews provided the researcher with important qualitative data to better understand the teacher's perceptions of the SWPBIS program at the middle school. A sample from the SWPBIS Staff Interview was question number 4, "*Do you believe that the SWPBIS program has helped to curve negative student behaviors?*" Interviewees

were also asked the follow-up questions of *“Why or why not”* and *“Have there been other approaches to handling student discipline that have worked better?”* The question was number four of six and gave staff participants an opportunity to reflect on the SWPBIS program regarding their use and its effects on student behaviors. It also gave staff participants a chance to reflect on other potential programs that they feel were more effective with curbing negative student behaviors.

The data collected during this study was focused on ensuring that each research question had ample statistics to answer the question and utilize data triangulation to ensure an elaborate and thorough response. More specifically, each research question had a different focus utilizing mixed methods data to meet its needs. The first research question, *“How does the current SWPBIS program impact student behaviors reviewing rewards?”* was answered through three main data collection points using quantitative and qualitative data. The first data collected was the number of students receiving rewards during the 2021-2022 school year and the 2022-2023 school year. One of the head teachers at the middle school was the team member of the SWPBIS program that took on the responsibility of collecting and updating this data on an excel document. The total number of OSS collected from the start of the school year through the 3rd 9 weeks (135 school days) for the 2021-2022 school year and the 2022-2023 school year was the second data point to understand the SWPBIS programs positive or negative impact on student behaviors. OSS data was collected through Tyler Student Information System (SIS) to ensure the accuracy of the data. All suspension data must be inputted into the Tyler SIS system and therefore the data extraction from this system provided the most accurate and up to date statistics. The rewards and OSS data provided two forms of

quantitative data for comparison purposes of the rewards and number of OSS each school year at the middle school. The final data point for this research question included a qualitative layer of data through one-on-one interviews with participating teachers at the middle school. The interviews were organized through an email sent to staff regarding the expectations and scheduling of the SWPBIS interviews. The actual interviews were conducted via Zoom and were recorded with field notes also being used. The interviews added value regarding the perceptions of teachers, while also reviewing clear quantitative data over the course of the two school years. To be more specific, SWPBIS Staff Interview questions 3-6 helped to pinpoint the teacher perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the SWPBIS rewards in conjunction with OSS data.

The second research question, *“What impact does the SWPBIS program have on the number of out-of-school suspensions?”* was answered through two main pieces of data. The first data utilized was the total number of OSS collected during the first 135 days of the school year (2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year). The second and final pieces of data collected were the SET data and School-Wide Benchmarks of Quality Scoring Form. Specifically, the SET data (mid-year) and the School-Wide Benchmarks of Quality Scoring Form (second semester) were both analyzed with comparisons of the 2021-2022 versus 2022-2023 school year. To understand how the SWPBIS program has been effective at addressing the concerns of the middle school, data must be provided and analyzed as a comparison. The data provided by these sources gave quantitative data to review if the OSS’s at the middle school improved, and how that correlated with the report on the SET and School-Wide Benchmarks of Quality Scoring Form.

The third research question, “*What is the middle school staff’s perception of the effectiveness of the SWPBIS program from year one to year two of implementation?*” required two main data collections that were qualitative. The first qualitative data collected was the survey research (Likert Scale) collected during the 2021-2022 school year and the 2022-2023 school year. The second piece of data utilized was the one-on-one interviews with 13 teacher participants. Contrary to the second research question, the third research question strictly focused on qualitative data to understand the staff member’s perceptions on how the SWPBIS impacted the middle school. The survey provided two years of data to compare and contrast. The qualitative data through an interview provided an opportunity for the volunteer teachers to have more of a voice to express their thoughts and feelings on the effectiveness of the SWPBIS program. To be more specific with the qualitative data, SWPBIS Staff Perceptions Survey (Appendix D) questions 6-14 and SWPBIS Staff Interview (Appendix E) questions 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 focused on collecting valuable data regarding the staff ‘s perceptions of the effectiveness of the SWPBIS program from year one to year two.

Validity

Validity is an important aspect of any research that is being conducted. Mertler (2022) notes how the importance for establishing quality traditional research is focused on validity and reliability. The validity of this study was conducted following important strategies using mixed methods research. Qualitative data was used following the use through multiple methods and sources to enhance the validity of the research (Mertler, 2022). Quantitative data collected was specifically focused on appropriateness and accuracy for the purposes of the doctoral research study (Mertler, 2022). Together, both

qualitative and quantitative data incorporated various validity strategies to ensure a quality, accurate and credible doctoral research project.

School discipline (OSS) was one of the means of data collected to answer the research questions posed in this doctoral research project. Data collection for school discipline was chosen carefully to ensure consistency over the course of the two school years studied. The student handbook at the middle school had major updates (including student code of conduct) during the 2020-2021 school year, which is important to note due to the need for disciplinary consequences to be consistent during the 2021-2022 school year and the 2022-2023 school year. The exclusionary data in this study only included OSS by design. When handling lower level disciplinary infractions (Tier 1 and Tier 2), a school principal has more discrepancy in the type of consequence they may issue including a documented warning, lunch detention, and after school detention. For higher level infractions (Tier 3 and Tier 4), the student code of conduct is more specific on the consequence, eliminating the option for discrepancy allotted to the principal. Considering the research focus, the critical factor with data collection regarding validity is if it is appropriate and accurate for the purposes of answering the research questions (Mertler, 2022). As a result, OSS was the most appropriate disciplinary data to use considering the validity and reliability of this data.

The rewards data collected was meant to provide specific quantitative data that would be clear and concise. When the SWPBIS program was first implemented during the 2019-2020 school year, there were differences in the program and the reward process. Initially, students would only have one chance per week to receive a reward based upon meeting the expectations of the SWPBIS program and earning PRIDE tickets. The

reward process was updated during the reimplementing of the SWPBIS program during the 2021-2022 school year. The goal was to increase the amount of rewards the students could receive and implement a SWPBIS store. The SWPBIS store again received another update during the 2022-2023 school year to add in the component of it being student operated and offering more rewards. Therefore, the rewards data for this research included the month and number of rewards issued based upon this new rewards method. To ensure accuracy and consistency of data collection, tracking of this data was completed by the same head teacher, who is an integral member of the SWPBIS PRIDE team at the middle school. Overall, consistency with data collection for rewards is just as important as the type of data collected.

To ensure a better understanding of the staff member's perception of the SWPBIS program, one-on-one interviews were conducted following a specific process. Mertler (2022) points out, "in semistructured interviews, the researcher asks several "base" questions but also has the option of following up a given response with additional questions, depending on the situation" (p. 204). The researcher completed a script that was read during each interview and also prepared an interview guide in advance. The interviews themselves included the researcher taking detailed notes and also video recording the interview session that was conducted via Zoom. The script, guide and notes during the interview helped the researcher to stay focused on the questions being asked. The voice recording ensured that the researcher could review the interview and fully capture the qualitative data.

The SWPBIS data collected for this study provided the researcher with quality data based upon consistency with the SWPBIS leadership. The middle school was

fortunate to work with the same consultant through the Watson Institute during the inception of the SWPBIS program and its reintegration. The data collected for the SET and Benchmarks of Quality Scoring Form were completed each year by the same SWPBIS consultant. Ensuring consistency with the process of collecting and documenting the data following the same standard.

The final collection of data was the staff surveys implemented to collect qualitative data regarding staff perceptions of the SWPBIS program from the 2021-2022 school year and the 2022-2023 school year. The researcher obtained survey feedback in November of 2022 to ensure that perceptions of the 2021-2022 school year were fresh in the volunteering teachers' minds. The survey was sent to staff members September 27, 2022 and the researcher did not receive all completed surveys until November of 2022. The researcher notes that some teachers in the study completed the survey closer to its release date. The second survey implemented in March of 2023 provided staff with the same exact survey questions focused on the 2022-2023 school year and their perceptions of the SWPBIS program. The survey was completed by the participating staff members in the beginning of March of 2023. Consistency was the main focus when collecting this data so that staff perceptions were analyzed following identical survey questions.

Data was triangulated during this study to ensure that there were multiple data points focused on each question following the mixed methods research design. The goal was that “both data sets will lead to similar and supporting conclusions with respect to the research questions being investigated” (Mertler, 2022, p. 151). Each research question had a minimum of two data points that was meant to ensure the validity when answering the research question through accumulated data. For example, the first

research question reviewed rewards data, OSS disciplinary data and one-on-one interviews. The data sources include qualitative and quantitative data utilizing different methods focused on the same research question. The second research question used quantitative data, specifically OSS data and SWPBIS data. SWPBIS data accumulated for this question provides two different forms of quantitative data in the form of the School-Wide Evaluation Tool and the School-Wide Benchmarks of Quality Scoring Form. The third and final research question used only qualitative data but from two different sources. This research question used staff surveys and one-on-one interviews with the teachers that participated in the study to understand the staff's perception of the SWPBIS program and how implementation has evolved from year one to year two (post COVID-19 pandemic).

Summary

In summary, this study is meant to help the leaders and staff members of the school district better understand the impact (positive or negative) that the SWPBIS PRIDE program has on student behaviors and the culture of the building (staff perceptions). The mixed methods design utilized was the convergent parallel design to keep quantitative and qualitative data prioritized in an equal manner (Mertler, 2022). The goal with this doctoral research is to provide stakeholders with mixed methods data to help focus on the improvement areas of the SWPBIS program, while also pointing out any positive aspect of the program. The objective is to not only find what is not working, but to also highlight the positive features that the staff have worked diligently to implement during the past two school years. This study is two-fold in its intention for improvement. The research is also meant to provide other interested school districts with

useful data if they are in the process of planning and/or implementing a SWPBIS program within one of their schools. This study is unique in the fact that there is a lack of research for secondary SWPBIS programs. It is also unique because it gave the viewpoint of a SWPBIS program that was reinstated post COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the research provided and compared data from year one to year two of the reimplementation of the SWPBIS program reviewing both quantitative and qualitative data to ensure a full picture on any improvements in student behaviors and the perceptions of the staff during this time.

Overall, the mixed methods data in the study is meant to provide a full picture of the benefits and improvement areas of this SWPBIS program for the researched school district and other school districts new to the framework. The qualitative data used in this study is in the form of teacher surveys and one-on-one interviews. The quantitative data used in this study is in the form of SWPBIS rewards data, out-of-school suspension data, School-Wide Evaluation Tool data and the School-Wide Benchmarks of Quality Scoring Form data. The goal with the mixed methods research is to triangulate the data to analyze the impact that the SWPBIS program has on student behaviors and staff perceptions. Chapter IV will be focused on analyzing the data and providing the results of the research.

CHAPTER IV

Data Analysis and Results

The action research conducted for the middle school SWPBIS program (PRIDE) utilized both quantitative and qualitative data. The researcher designed and collected the data, so that each research question had a specific breakdown of what exact data would be used to answer the question. Chapter III detailed the methodology for this action research study. Quantitative data was collected in the form of OSS, rewards, SET and School-Wide Benchmarks data. The initial qualitative data was in the form of two staff surveys collecting data from the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year. Additional qualitative data was a staff interview that was conducted during the 2022-2023 school year. The action research focus was to understand if the SWPBIS program improved the amount of out-of-school suspensions, in correlation to what the staff members perceptions were of the program during the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year. How does the SWPBIS rewards data correlate with the number of OSS? Would the teachers think the program was working well, but the OSS and SWPBIS data not show it? Would the teachers think the program was not working, but have the data show that the number of OSS days have improved? These are some of the important points that the three research questions in this study focused on.

1. How does the current School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) program impact student behaviors reviewing rewards?
2. What impact does the SWPBIS program have on the number of out-of-school suspensions (OSS)?

3. What is the middle school staff's perception of the effectiveness of the SWPBIS program from year one to year two of implementation?

Chapter IV of this action research study will focus on data analysis and results utilizing the quantitative and qualitative data that was collected during the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year. The beginning of this chapter will provide the process that the data was collected and analyzed. The chapter will then transition to the results section which will provide a narrative as well as tables and graphs to display the data accumulated and analyzed. Next, a discussion section will provide additional detail in relation to the data to provide a further interpretation of the process in this action research study. Finally, chapter IV will wrap up with a summary of the data and results before transitioning to the final chapter on conclusions.

Data Analysis

This action research focused on the mixed methods approach with both quantitative and qualitative data being collected and analyzed to answer the three research questions. The first quantitative data to be analyzed was the out-of-school suspension data from the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year. The OSS data was accumulated from the beginning of the school year through the first 135 days of school (end of the 3rd 9 weeks). The OSS data from each school year was compiled onto a singular spreadsheet with a breakdown of the four different levels of suspension (one-day, two-day, three-day and ten-day) per school year. Table 2 displays the OSS data comparison for the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year.

Table 2

OSS Data Comparison

OSS Data Comparison	2021-2022	Days Suspended	Ranking	2022-2023	Days Suspended	Ranking
1-day OSS	85	85	2	99	99	1
1-day OSS	14	28	2	33	66	1
1-day OSS	67	201	2	100	300	1
1-day OSS	4	40	2	6	60	1
1-day OSS		0	2	1	0.5	1
1-day OSS		0	2	6	24	1
1-day OSS		0	2	7	35	1
Total number of suspensions:	17		2	252		1
Total number of suspension DAYS:		354	2		584.5	1

When reviewing the OSS data, it is important to note the days suspended per OSS reviewing the four different levels (one-day, two-day, three-day and ten-day). The days suspended help to demonstrate the severity of the suspensions between the two school years. The OSS data was analyzed using the ordinal scales method through a ranked system between the school years. The table and the ordinal scales concept provided a visual to see the difference between the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year regarding the total OSS incidents and the OSS days per school year. The researcher then reviewed

each of the four levels of OSS, including their rankings, as well as a total number of OSS incidents and OSS days per school year.

The second quantitative data set to be analyzed was the SWPBIS rewards data from the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year. The SWPBIS rewards data was collected from the beginning of the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year until the end of March in each respective year. Once the data was compiled onto a singular spreadsheet, the rewards data was analyzed by reviewing the results of the data as a total. The SWPBIS rewards data for both school years is listed in Table 3.

Table 3

SWPBIS Rewards Data

Month	2021-2022	2022-2023
September	278	298
October	162	249
November	125	195
December	97	170
January	66	180
February	84	256
March	65	534
TOTAL	877	1882
Ranking	#2	#1

The final forms of quantitative data on this action research study are in form of SWPBIS rubric data from the School-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET) and the School-Wide Benchmarks of Quality Scoring Form. The data from both the SET and Benchmarks form were collected and analyzed during the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year. Both forms of SWPBIS rubric data was completed with the support of the same consultant from the Watson Institute. The SET provided valuable data from both school years reviewing seven feature categories and an overall score. The SET form with data from both school years is listed in Table 4.

Table 4

School-Wide Evaluation Tool

School-wide Evaluation Tool
(SET-D)
Scoring Guide Revised 3/22/07

School XXXXX Date 11/15/2021 & 1/10/2023
 District XXXXX State Pa
 Pre _____
 Post X Set Data Collector XXXXX

			2021-2022 Results
Feature	Evaluation Question	Data Source (circle sources used) P= product; I= interview; O= observation	Score: 0-2
A. Expectations Defined	1. Is there documentation that staff has agreed to 5 or fewer positively stated school rules/behavioral expectations? (0=no; 1= too many/negatively focused; 2 = yes)	materials I _____ Other _____ O	2
	2. Are the agreed upon rules & expectations publicly posted in 5 of 10 locations? (See interview & observation form for selection of locations). (0= 0-4; 1= 5-7; 2= 8-10)	Wall Posters, Other _____ O	2
B. Behavioral Expectations Taught	1. Is there a documented system for teaching behavioral expectations to students on an annual basis? (0= no; 1 = states that teaching will occur; 2= yes)	Lesson plan books, Instructional materials, Other _____ I	1
	2. Do 90% of the staff asked state that teaching of behavioral expectations to students has occurred this year? (0= 0-50% 1= 51-89%, 2=90%-100%)	Interviews Other _____ I	2
	3. Do 90% of team members asked state that the school-wide program has been taught/reviewed with staff on an annual basis? (0= 0-50% 1= 51-89%, 2=90%-100%)	Interviews Other _____ I	2
	4. Can at least 70% of 15 or more students state 67% of the school rules/behavioral expectations? (0= 0-50% 1= 51-69%, 2= 70-100%)	Interviews Other _____ I	0
	5. Can 90% or more of the staff asked list 67% of the school rules/behavioral expectations? (0= 0-50% 1= 51-89%, 2=90%-100%)	Interviews Other _____ I	1

C. On-going System for rewarding Behavioral Expectations	1. Is there a documented system for rewarding student behavior? (0= no; 1 = states to acknowledge, not how; 2= yes)	Lesson plan books, instructional materials, Other _____ P	2	2
	2. Do 50% or more students asked indicate they have received a reward (other than verbal praise) for expected behaviors over the past two months? (0=0-25%; 1=26-49%; 2=50-100%)	Interviews Other _____ I	2	2
	3. Do 90% of staff asked indicate they have delivered a reward (other than verbal praise) to students for expected behaviors over the past two months? (0=0-50%; 1=51-89%; 2=90-100%)	Interviews Other _____ I	2	2
D. Systems for Responding to Behavioral Violations	1. Is there a documented system for dealing with and reporting specific behavioral violations? (0= no; 1= states to document, but not how; 2= yes)	Discipline handbook, instructional materials, Other _____ P	2	2
	2. Do 90% of staff asked agree with administration on what problems are office-managed and what problems are classroom-managed? (0= 0-50%; 1= 51-89%; 2=90-100%)	Interviews Other _____ I	1	1
	3. Is the documented crisis plan for responding to extreme dangerous situations readily available in 6-7 locations? (0= 0-3; 1=4-5; 2= 6-7)	Walls Other _____ O	2	2
	4. Do 90% of staff asked agree with administration on the procedure for handling extreme emergencies (stranger in building with a weapon)? (0=0-50%; 1=51-89%; 2=90-100%)	Interviews Other _____ I	1	2
E. Monitoring & Decision-Making	1. Does the discipline referral form list (a) student/grade, (b) date, (c) time, (d) referring staff, (e) problem behavior, (f) location, (g) persons involved, (h) probable motivation, & (i) administrative decision?	School improvement plan P Interview Other _____ I	2	2
	2. Can the administrator clearly define a system for collecting & summarizing discipline referrals (computer software, data entry time)? (0=no; 1=referrals are collected; 2=yes)	Interviews Other _____ I	1	1
	3. Does the administrator report that the team provides discipline data summary reports to the staff at least three times/year? (0=no; 1=1-2 times/yr; 2= 2-3 or more times/yr)	Interviews Other _____ I	1	1

	4. Do 90% of team members asked report that discipline data is used for making decision in designing, implementing, and revising school-wide effective behavior support efforts? (0= 0-50%; 1= 51-89%; 2= 90-100%)	Interviews Other _____ I	0	0
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F. Management	1. Does the school improvement plan list improving behavior support systems as one of the top 3 school improvement plan goals? (0=no; 1=4th or lower priority; 2=1st-3rd priority)	School improvement plan P Interview Other _____ I	1	1
	2. Can 90% of staff asked report that there is a school-wide team established to address behavior support systems in the school? (0=0-50%; 1=51-89%; 2=90-100%)	Interviews Other _____ I	2	2
	3. Does the administrator report that team membership includes representation of all staff? (0=no; 2=yes)	Interviews Other _____ I	2	2
	4. Can 90% of team members asked identify the team leader? (0=1-51%; 1=51-89%; 2=90-100 %)	Interviews Other _____ I	2	2
	5. Is the administrator an active member of the school-wide behavior support team? (0=no; 1=yes, but not consistently; 2=yes)	Interviews Other _____ I	2	2
	6. Does the administrator report that team meetings occur at least monthly? (0=no team meeting; 1=less often than monthly; 2=at least monthly)	Interviews Other _____ I	1	1
	7. Does the administrator report that the team reports progress to the staff at least four times per year? (0=no; 1= less than 4 times per year; 2=yes)	Interview Plan, calendar Other _____ I	1	1
	8. Does the team have an action plan with specific goals that is less than one year old? (0= no; 2=yes)	Annual Plan, calendar Other _____ I	2	1
G. District-level Support	1. Does the school budget contain an allocated amount of money for building and maintaining school-wide behavioral support? (0= no; 2= yes)	Interviews Other _____ I	2	2
	2. Can the administrator identify an out-of-school liaison in the district or state? (0= no; 2=yes)	Interviews Other _____ I	2	2

Summary Scores 2021-2022	A= 4/4	B=6/10	C = 6/ 6	D = 6/8	4/6
	100%	60%	100%	75%	66%
	F= 13/16	G = 4/ 4		Mean= 6.14/7	
	81%	100%		88%	
Summary Scores 2022-2023	A= 4/4	B=6/10	C = 6/ 6	D = 7/8	4/6
	100%	60%	100%	87%	66%
	F= 12/16	G = 4 / 4		Mean= 6.14/7	
	75%	100%		88%	

Analyzing the SET data was completed by including both school years in one excel document. Green highlights were used to signify the higher score per question. Finally, a yellow highlight was used to note the summary scores for both the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year. The yellow highlight was meant to show the higher of the two scores, but with the tie in score both summary scores were highlighted. The School-Wide Benchmarks of Quality Scoring Form also used a side-by-side comparison to compare both the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year. The researcher began by reviewing the end score and then proceeded to review the various categories on the form, which included notes. A descriptive narrative was a valuable data analysis tool that was utilized to compare and contrast the different sections of the form.

Qualitative data was collected through two different forms, staff surveys (2) and a one-on-one staff interview. The action research study included 13 volunteers from the middle school. The survey was sent to all staff members at the middle school but only ended up including teachers who participated. The first qualitative data collection was the SWPBIS Staff Perceptions Survey (Appendix D) that was implemented for the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year. To analyze this data, the researcher created a codebook for both surveys using Microsoft Excel. Frequency distribution was then utilized to analyze the data between the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year. Which helped to

organize the results and then compile them onto a table. The researcher also used notes while analyzing the results to narrate significant findings. The second and final form of qualitative data was the SWPBIS Staff Interview that was a total of six questions in the form of a semi-structured interview. Analyzing the interview data was comprehensive since it had to be compiled onto a singular document after a review of the recordings and notes. Key words and phrases were highlighted using different colors that were focused on different themes.

Results

The presentation of the results was an important section of this action research on SWPBIS. In an effort to organize the results, each research question was included, as well as the specific quantitative and/or qualitative data that was used to answer the question. A brief description was incorporated regarding how the plan of action was implemented to accurately collect and analyze the data. Data was also triangulated for each research question to help tie the different forms of data back to the research question. The data results were then presented, which also included Tables and Figures to give a strong visual on the research data to help connect the results to each question. Each research question utilized either quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods data to appropriately answer the question while focusing on the data results.

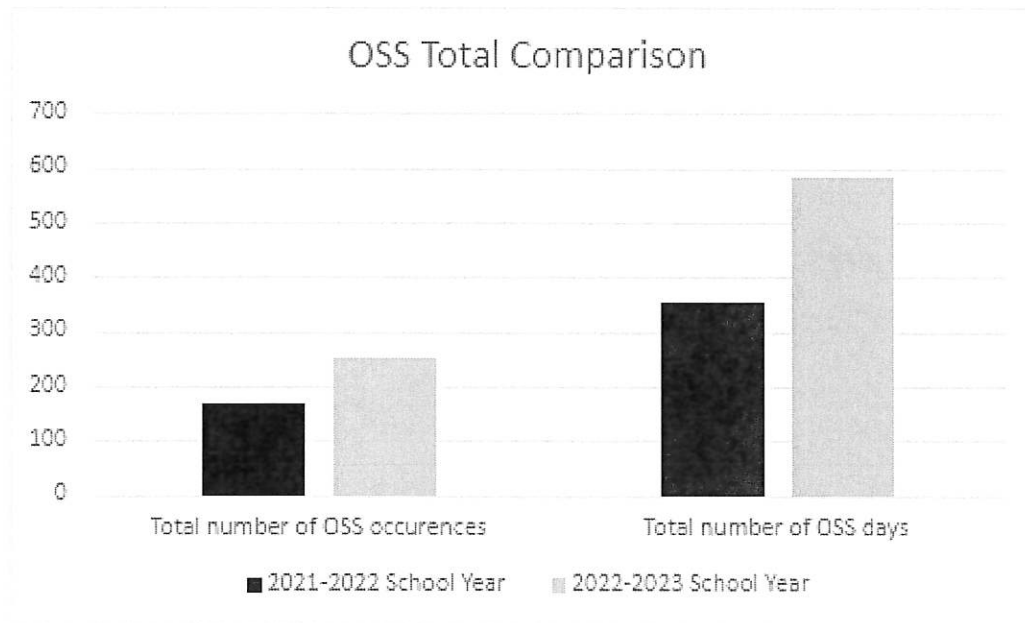
Research Question 1

The first research question in this action research study was, *“How does the current School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) program impact student behaviors reviewing rewards?”* The quantitative data compiled and

analyzed for this research question was the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 rewards and OSS data. The qualitative data was from the SWPBIS Staff Interviews during the 2022-2023 school year. The quantitative data (OSS and rewards) as well as the qualitative data (staff interviews) were triangulated to answer the first research question. The number of rewards issued through the SWPBIS system was compared against the total number of OSS (OSS incidents and days). To support the research question with additional data, one-on-one interviews were incorporated to better understand how the SWPBIS program impacted student behaviors reviewing rewards. The data analysis began with a comparison of the 2021-2022 and the 2022-2023 OSS data (Table 2). The data was collected from the start of each school year, through the end of the 3rd 9 weeks or 135 school days. The collection window from the 2021-2022 school year was from August 18, 2021, to March 18, 2022 (2021-2022 school year) and August 24, 2022, to March 22, 2023 (2022-2023 school year). The total number of OSS were far greater during the 2022-2023 school year at 584.5 total days, while the OSS during the 2021-2022 school year was 354 days. The total number of times a student received an OSS was also greater in 2022-2023 at 252 with 2021-2022 being 170. Figure 1 below shows a comparison of each school year and the total number of OSS occurrences versus the total number of OSS days.

Figure 1

OSS Total Comparison

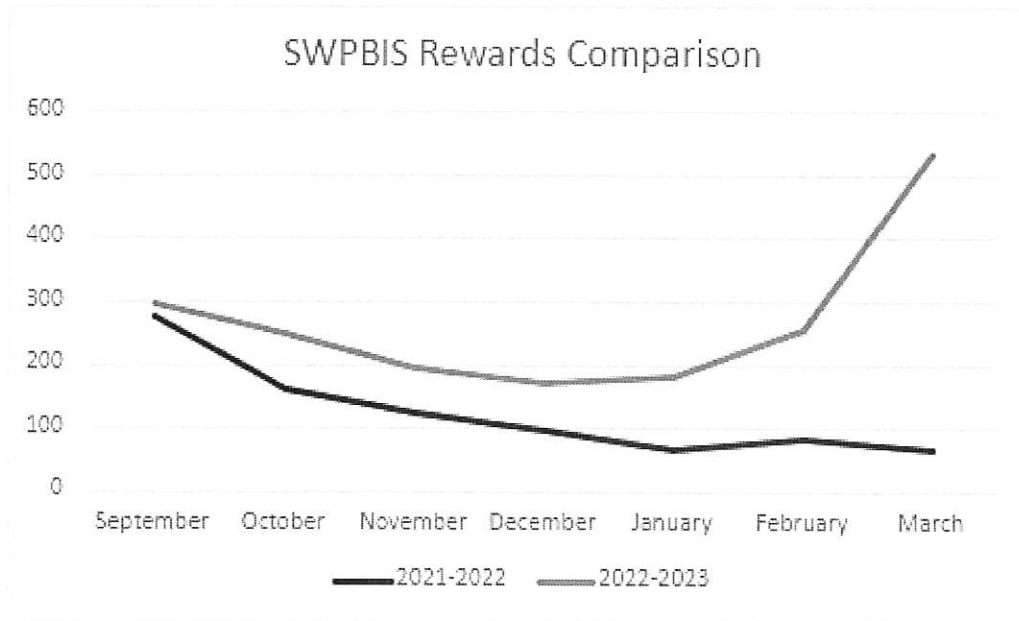


This means that the behavioral offenses that warranted an OSS during the 2022-2023 school year occurred 82 more times with 230.5 more days of OSS. The four levels of suspensions (one-day, two-day, three-day and ten-day) were higher for each level during the 2022-2023 school year in comparison with the 2021-2022 school year. One-day OSS incidents were 85 in 2021-2022 and 99 in 2022-2023 with the same number of suspension days. Two-day OSS incidents were 14 (28 days suspended) in 2021-2022 and 33 (66 days suspended) in 2022-2023. Three-day OSS incidents were 67 (201 days suspended) in 2021-2022 and 100 (300 days suspended) in 2022-2023. The closest level of suspension was ten-day OSS with the 2022-2023 school year being six occurrences (60 days of OSS) and the 2021-2022 school year being four occurrences (40 days of OSS). The OSS data signified that the total number of days and times a student received an OSS increased and was far greater during the 2022-2023 school year.

SWPBIS rewards data was the next set of quantitative data analyzed, focusing again on the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year (Table 3) from the end of March during each respective year. The rewards data showed that the total rewards during the 2022-2023 school year was far greater, at a total of 1,882 versus the 2021-2022 school year, with a total of 877. The data clearly showed a decline in rewards during the 2021-2022 school year with the highest amount of SWPBIS rewards being issued during the month of September (278 rewards). In contrast, the rewards during the 2022-2023 school year showed a strong start with rewards being issued (298 rewards), then a steady decline in rewards (lowest being December at 170 rewards) before seeing a steady increase and spike up to 534 rewards during the month of March 2023. During the 2021-2022 school year, the decline was consistent with the only slight increase from month to month being from January (66 rewards) to February (84 rewards). That school year finally hit its lowest number of rewards during March with a total of 65, while that month was the highest number of rewards during the 2022-2023 school year. Figure 2 shows a visual on the comparison of SWPBIS rewards between the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year.

Figure 2

SWPBIS Rewards Comparison



The data between the school years demonstrates a much higher number of rewards being issued during the 2022-2023 school year, yet a very high increase in OSS days as well. To be more specific, when comparing the 2021-2022 school year, in the 2022-2023 school year the rewards data saw a little over 2.1 times (1,005) more of the rewards being awarded. OSS days during that time also saw a significant increase being a little over 1.6 times (230.5) more days of OSS, which denotes that while the number of rewards increased, so have the number of OSS days.

The final piece of data to answer the first research question is qualitative from the one-on-one interviews (Appendix E) conducted with the 13 teacher participants during the 2022-2023 school year. Questions 3-6 specifically are aimed to focus on understanding the teacher’s perceptions regarding how the SWPBIS program impacted

student behaviors reviewing rewards. Question three of the SWPBIS Staff Interview states, *“What are the rewards used for the SWPBIS program and have they been successful?”* Each teacher gave some snippet of the SWPBIS rewards being used from their own observations and knowledge. Some were able to talk about the end of 9-week big reward, while others only focused on the “small rewards” such as the “clutch toy type things such as stuffed animals and candy, snack type prizes.” As far as the perception of the success of the rewards was concerned, it was split with yes being the main teacher response. Seven of the teachers said that yes, the rewards for the SWPBIS program have been successful with six of the teachers saying a mix of yes and no (no teacher directly said no, they were not successful). For the teachers that said yes, some teachers made comments such as “I believe it has been successful” and one teacher noted “so far the success rate on rewards is very high.” The teachers that stated responses of a mixed yes and no, noted reasons such as “it is working for some kids but not all of the kids”, “some are motivated by stuffed animals, 8th grade honors, no”, “not a cover all, they are not all buying into it” and “I would think the majority do care about that and do want to get the rewards and positive reinforcement from the teachers.”

Question four of the SWPBIS Staff Interview states, *“Do you believe that the SWPBIS program has helped to curve negative student behaviors?”* The results from the 13 teachers on this interview question was a mix with four stating yes, four stating no and five stating a mixture of yes and no. The teachers who stated yes all noted something along the lines of impacting the masses, but not students who need the additional positive support, which is important because it shows that even though they believe the program is helping to curve negative student behaviors, it is not working for all of the students.

The clarifying question for number four, *“Have there been other approaches to handling student discipline that have worked better?”* had a mix of responses from the teachers. Seven of the teachers noted yes, there have been other approaches. The comments made were “I think that when a student exhibits negative behaviors, they need to be pulled into the office right then and there”, “yes, our student resource officer (SRO) actual discipline and follow-through”, “consequences” and two teachers that noted ISS.

The fifth interview question, *“Has the SWPBIS program been implemented properly?”* displayed data that was more one sided. Eleven of the teachers interviewed noted yes, that the SWPBIS program has been implemented properly. None of the teachers said no but two of the teachers had mixed feelings. One of the teachers with mixed feelings noted “I would say by most staff members, yes, but I think we need to be more consistent within teachers and grade levels” and the other teacher stated “at the very beginning it was implemented properly.” That teacher then noted when the Watson Institute has been involved and also the amount of turnover of staff in the school causing difficulties. The clarifying question, *“Do all teachers/staff members implement the program with fidelity?”* had a majority of the teachers saying no (nine teachers). Two of the teachers said yes, noting “from my circle, yes” and “personally, I like it and think it works well.” While the other two teachers stated that they were not sure with one noting, “hard for me to answer, I don’t see many other teachers.”

The final SWPBIS interview question focused on answering the first research question was question six, *“Have you personally seen a difference in your student’s behavior when you have implemented the SWPBIS program?”* The majority of teachers (nine) stated that they did see a difference in their student’s behaviors when they have

implemented the SWPBIS program. “Yes, I have seen a difference with most of my kids”, “yes, if they have their card, they are excited to get their stamps” and “absolutely, 100%” are some of the comments from the teachers during the interview. Two of the teachers stated no and two stated a mixture of yes and no. One of the teachers who stated no, made the comment that “behavior in the classroom is tough” and the other teacher initially said yes and then said, “I am going to change my answer and say no because the good kids are doing what the good kids always do, it does not change anything.”

Research Question 2

The second research question, “*What impact does the SWPBIS program have on the number of out-of-school suspensions (OSS)?*” This research question only utilized quantitative data to answer the question. OSS data and SWPBIS data in the form of the School-Wide Evaluation Tool and the School-Wide Benchmarks of Quality Scoring Form were used to understand how the SWPBIS program impacted the number of OSS. To answer the second research question, the researcher triangulated the quantitative discipline and SWPBIS data. The OSS data was compared with the SET and the School-Wide Benchmarks of Quality Scoring Form to better understand how the SWPBIS program has affected the number of OSS. The same OSS data analyzed during the first research question was again utilized from the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year. Correlating the total number of out-of-school suspensions, the four levels of OSS (one-day, two-day, three-day and ten-day) were also analyzed. To see the full data view, Table 2 would show the OSS data in its entirety. Table 5 is a more concise breakdown of the data showing the total number of suspensions and the total number of suspension days. The first three 9 weeks OSS data from the 2022-2023 school year was significantly

greater than 2021-2022. The total number of suspensions being 252 (82 suspensions more) and the total number of suspension days being 584.5 (230.5 suspension days more).

Table 5

OSS Data Comparison End Results

OSS Data Comparison	2021-2022	Days Suspended	Ranking	2022-2023	Days Suspended	Ranking
Total number of suspensions	170		2	252		1
Total number of suspension DAYS		354	2		584.5	1

The next quantitative data was SWPBIS specific data focused on SET data and the School-Wide Benchmarks of Quality Scoring Form. The data comparison for both forms of SWPBIS data compares the 2021-2022 to the 2022-2023 school year. When reviewing the SET data, the goal was to accumulate data from the midyear point of the school year. In the 2021-2022 school year, the data was collected November 2021 while in the 2022-2023 school year, the data was collected January 2023. Both dates give around mid-year data, with one being before the new year and the other directly after. Note that the data itself would not make a difference with this variation in timeframe. The SET data did not provide much value to the action research with the summary score in both school years being exactly 88% (Table 6).

Table 6

School-Wide Evaluation Tool Summary Scores

Summary Scores 2021-2022	A= 4/4	B=6/10	C = 6/ 6	D = 6/8	E = 4/6
	100%	60%	100%	75%	66%
	F= 13/16	G = 4/ 4	Mean= 6.14/7		
	81%	100%	88%		
Summary Scores 2022-2023	A= 4/4	B=6/10	C = 6/ 6	D = 7/8	E = 4/6
	100%	60%	100%	87%	66%
	F= 12/16	G = 4 / 4	Mean= 6.14/7		
	75%	100%	88%		

The summary data in each category was exactly the same except for the data in categories D and F. The first category difference was D. Systems for Responding to Behavioral Violations with 2021-2022 having a score of 1 and 2022-2023 having a score of 2. The score of 2 responded to the question, *“Do 90% of staff asked agree with administration on the procedure for handling extreme emergencies (stranger in building with weapon)?”* with 2 equaling 90%-100% as opposed to 1 equaling 51%-89%. The second difference in score was from F. Management with 2021-2022 having a score of 2 and 2022-2023 having a score of 1. The question was, *“Does the team have an action plan with specific goals that is less than one year old?”* with 0 representing no and 2 representing yes. With the 2022-2023 school year scoring a 1 in that category, one would assume that certain criteria were met with that question, but not all. There were other slight differences in scores, shown in Table 7, but none of the scores made a difference in the overall outcome of the SET comparing both school years.

Table 7

School-Wide Evaluation Tool Differences

Feature	Evaluation Question	Data Source (circle sources used) P= product, I= interview, O= observation	2021-2022 Results	2022-2023 Results
			Score: 0-2	Score: 0-2
B. Behavioral Expectations Taught	1. Is there a documented system for teaching behavioral expectations to students on an annual basis? (0= no; 1 = states that teaching will occur; 2= yes)	Lesson plan books, Instructional materials, Other _____ I	1	2
	2. Do 90% of the staff asked state that teaching of behavioral expectations to students has occurred this year? (0= 0-50%; 1= 51-89%; 2=90%-100%)	Interviews Other _____ I	2	1
	3. Do 90% of team members asked state that the school-wide program has been taught/reviewed with staff on an annual basis? (0= 0-50%; 1= 51-89%; 2=90%-100%)	Interviews Other _____ I	2	1
	4. Can at least 70% of 15 or more students state 67% of the school rules/behavioral expectations? (0= 0-50%; 1= 51-69%; 2= 70-100%)	Interviews Other _____ I	0	1
D. Systems for responding to Behavioral Violations	4. Do 90% of staff asked agree with administration on the procedure for handling extreme emergencies (stranger in building with a weapon)? (0=0-50%; 1-51-89%; 2=90—100%)	Interviews Other _____ I	1	2
F. Management	8. Does the team have an action plan with specific goals that is less than one year old? (0= no; 2=yes)	Annual Plan, calendar Other _____ I	2	1

The final piece of quantitative data to answer the second research question was from the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 School-Wide Benchmarks of Quality Scoring Form. The coach score is completed as step 1 of the Benchmarks of Quality Scoring Form process and was completed by a consultant from the Watson Institute. The form was then given to the SWPBIS team to complete the same scoring form based upon the team’s most frequent response (step 2). Finally on step 3, the consultant placed a check mark next to any item where there is a discrepancy between the coach score and the team score (discrepancies are then documented on page 3 of the scoring form). The team score and coach score were reflective of each other with the team score being higher in the 2021-2022 school year and the coach score being exactly the same in both the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year (75%). During the 2021-2022 score year the SWPBIS team benchmarks score was 80%, while during the 2022-2023 school year the team benchmarks score was 76% (Table 8).

Table 8

Scoring of the Benchmarks of Quality

2021-2022	
Scoring the Benchmarks of Quality:	Team- <u>86</u> / <u>107</u> = <u>80%</u> Benchmarks Score
	Coach Total pts <u>81</u> / 107= 75%
2022-2023	
Scoring the Benchmarks of Quality:	Team- <u>82</u> / <u>107</u> = <u>76%</u> Benchmarks Score
	Coach Total pts <u>81</u> / 107= 75%

Analyzing the scoring portion of the data was an important step to understand the difference between the data in both school years from the perspective of the consultant from the Watson Institute (coach) and the SWPBIS team. The comparison of the data was organized by benchmarks scoring, improved areas and decreased areas. The data was reviewed comparing the 2021-2022 and the 2022-2023 school year.

Beginning with improved areas on the Benchmarks of Quality Scoring Form, there were discrepancies between areas that the coach scored as improved and areas that the SWPBIS team noted as being improved when comparing the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year. *“Team has administrative support”* was noted as being improved by the coach, but determined to be an area of improvement by the SWPBIS team.

“Discipline referral form includes information useful in decision making” was noted by the coach as an improvement between the school years, but the team had it marked as in place during both school years. Statements from the critical elements *“Effective Procedures for Dealing with Discipline”*, *“Data Entry & Analysis Plan Established”*, *“Expectations & Rules Developed”* and *“Lesson Plans for Teaching Expectations/Rules”* were all given the same score from year to year by the coach, but were scored by the

SWPBIS team as improving. The largest coach to SWPBIS team discrepancy was from the entire section of the critical element *“Expectations and Rules Developed.”* Overall, there were a total of 15 statements that had an improvement with coaching and/or SWPBIS team score between the 2021-2022 school year.

As for the decreased areas on the Benchmarks of Quality Scoring Form, the data was very consistent between the coach score and the SWPBIS team score when comparing the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year. There were a total of 10 statements that showed a consistency of a decreased coaching and SWPBIS team score. The largest critical element that was a needs improvement was *“Lesson Plans for Teaching Expectations/Rules”* which saw a total of four statements see a decrease from the 2021-2022 to the 2022-2023 school year. The largest decreases between the school years were the specific statements *“Data system is used to collect and analyze ODR data”*, *“Lessons use a variety of teaching strategies”* and *“Lessons are embedded into subject area curriculum”* with each seeing a decrease in two points.

Research Question 3

The third research question, *“What is the middle school staff’s perception of the effectiveness of the SWPBIS program from year one to year two of implementation?”*

The third and final research question only used qualitative data to answer the question in relation to the staff’s perception. The 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 SWPBIS Staff Perceptions Survey were used to answer this research question, specifically using questions 6-14. The 2022-2023 SWPBIS Staff Interviews was the second form of qualitative data using questions 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 to appropriately respond to the research question. The SWPBIS qualitative data was important when triangulating the survey and

interview data to answer the third research question. Since the SWPBIS program was reimplemented during the 2021-2022 school year, it was important to understand staff member perceptions regarding its effectiveness through both sets of qualitative data. The specific questions for both surveys and the interview were utilized since they were in relation to the better understanding staff perceptions of the SWPBIS program. When analyzing the data from the surveys, questions 1-5 focused more on the demographic data and a touch of disciplinary encounters regarding the thirteen teachers who participated in the action research (Table 9).

Table 9

SWPBIS Staff Perceptions Survey Demographic Data Comparison

SY	1. Which grade level do you teach at the middle school? (Check all that apply)	2. What is your teaching/supporting content area? (Circle one)		3. How many years have you been in education? (Circle one)		4. What is your gender? (Circle one)	5. How many disciplinary infractions do you submit per week? (Circle one)
21-22	Frequency Distribution	1 Math= 3	2 Science= 2	1 0-5= 1	3 11-15= 2	1 Male= 3	1 0-2= 12
		4 ELA= 4	5 Electives= 4	4 16-20= 4	5 21+= 6	2 Female= 10	2 3-5= 1
22-23	Frequency Distribution	1 Math= 3	2 Science= 2	1 0-5= 1	3 11-15= 2	1 Male= 3	1 0-2= 12
		4 ELA= 3	5 Electives= 5	4 16-20= 5	5 21+= 5	2 Female= 10	2 3-5= 1

There are two important notations regarding the demographic data. The first is that the first survey question, “Which grade level do you teach at the middle school?” provided data that was not useful since the teacher schedules were fluid between the school years with only one teacher during the 2021-2022 school year teaching one grade level and then two teachers during the 2022-2023 school year teaching one grade level. Secondly, in Table 9 there is a red highlight under question three, “How many years have

you been in education?” since the data between the school years is not accurate showing that one teacher went from 21+ years down to 16-20 years.

The SWPBIS survey questions from 6-13 (Table 10) were useful for this research question because it fully focused on the participants perceptions of the SWPBIS program from both the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year.

Table 10

SWPBIS Staff Perceptions Survey Perceptions Data Comparison

Survey Question	Survey Year	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
6. I believe that I have a strong understanding of the school’s SWPBIS program.	SY 2021-2022	0	0	6	7	
	SY 2022-2023	1	0	2	10	
7. I believe that I have implemented the SWPBIS program with fidelity.	SY 2021-2022	0	0	7	6	
	SY 2022-2023	0	0	6	7	
8. I believe that the staff as a whole is implementing the SWPBIS program to the best of their ability.	SY 2021-2022	0	2	10	1	
	SY 2022-2023	0	2	10	1	

9. I have seen a difference in student behavior whenever I implement the reward portion of the SWPBIS program.	SY 2021-2022	1	3	7	2	
	SY 2022-2023	0	3	8	2	
		Poor	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Excellent
10. How would you rate the training that you received to help you to effectively implement the SWPBIS program?	SY 2021-2022	0	1	3	7	2
	SY 2022-2023	0	1	1	5	6
		Classroom	Hall	Cafeteria	Homeroom	
11. I have seen a difference in student behavior in the following areas when I implement the SWPBIS program.	SY 2021-2022	12	1	2	6	
	SY 2022-2023	13	1	0	4	
		Never	Not very often	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always
12. When using the SWPBIS system, how often do you provide the reward aspect of the program?	SY 2021-2022	0	0	2	9	2
	SY 2022-2023	0	0	3	10	0
13. How often have you observed your colleagues implementing the SWPBIS program?	SY 2021-2022	0	0	8	5	0

	SY 2022- 2023	0	2	6	5	0
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The SWPBIS survey data provides slight variations from the 2021-2022 to the 2022-2023 school year. Most of the staff participants experienced an improvement over the two school years in their understanding of the SWPBIS program with one participant strongly disagreeing. The staff as a whole felt that they have implemented the program with fidelity with a singular staff improvement during the 2022-2023 school year. The staff as a whole have been noted as implementing the SWPBIS program to the best of their ability with exact data between the school years (only two staff participants disagreeing). Two staff members also noted that they have “not very often” observed colleagues implementing the SWPBIS program during the 2022-2023 school year. Question seven and question nine both showed a singular staff member improvement from each school year with question nine showing the bigger improvement from a staff member that strongly disagreed, improving to agreed. Staff members as a whole, feel that the SWPBIS program reward portion has positively impacted student behaviors (three disagreed between both school years). Staff have consistently utilized the reward portion of the program with one participant noting a decrease in their involvement down to “sometimes.” Training is an area of improvement in the survey with the 2022-2023 school year showing an increase from two excellent ratings up to six. Finally, staff members have seen a positive difference in student behaviors improve in the classroom area, but decrease in the areas of the cafeteria and homeroom from the 2021-2022 to the 2022-2023 school year.

The open-ended question on the survey, question 14, “*What do you believe can be done to better implement the school’s SWPBIS?*” was analyzed separately. The researcher reviewed the open-ended responses from the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year (Table 11).

Table 11

SWPBIS Staff Perceptions Survey Open-Ended Question (#14)

21-22 SY
14. What do you believe can be done to better implement the school’s SWPBIS? (Please provide a response with 2-3 sentences).
SWPBIS should have been implemented from the start of the school year. But due to a lot of changes and COVID protocols, that didn't happen until later. The buy in from both students and staff didn't work as well as it could have.
On-going trainings and "refreshers" are important. Documenting the data is also beneficial. Meeting as a team to discuss what's working what's not working. Question #2 doesn't pertain to me but answered the best I could.
Many students benefit from the school's SWPBIS program. But, I have select few students that are not motivated by the program. I am hoping in time that we can reach these students. I believe if the staff buys in to the program and shows excitement, the students will do the same.
I think Covid played a huge part in our SWPBIS program as we got off to a late start. It hasn't been followed through for an entire school year. I think teachers as a whole get busy with the things they need to do and sometimes forget to implement it as much as they should.
Some teachers use the reward system more than others, and some students naturally buy into it more than others. I think it helps to have frequent reminders to use the reward system (PRIDE tickets) because I know I personally intend to use it but then sometimes it slips my mind. I am pretty good about remembering to use the PRIDE tickets (or stamper) in the classroom, but I often don't think to have it in the hallway with me or when I cover a class. For students, I think it would be good to have as much variety as possible regarding potential prizes. Many students seems to like saving up to attend field trips, so that seems to be a good motivator. I thought the ice cream social was a success (2021-2022 school year), so more events like that would be good incentives as well.
Reminders to faculty & staff; I forget sometimes myself. Make sure that all students are aware of what is expected, including example for them. Show the rewards so all students know what rewards they can get.

As with every year, we need the buy in from the WHOLE staff. Several of the advanced students say that they are not receiving many PRIDE stamps from their teachers. Also, we surveyed the students at the beginning of the year as to what rewards they wanted to see, and we are currently implementing a lot of these rewards into our newly established school PRIDE store. Also, we are always in need of more staff to get involved to help with rewards, data, expectations.

I believe the entire staff should be a part of the PBIS team as a mandatory requirement. From there, we could have a lead team who handles the specifics. I think that because the whole staff is not involved (mandatory) in the PBIS meetings, they often are not implementing the system daily and with effectiveness.

We need more commitment from staff. Also, some people give too many stamps at one time. It would also be nice to have a different system than the cards. They loss them all the time.

A full training day allowing the teachers to be on the same page when disciplining or rewarding. I believe when the SWPBIS program is implemented the same throughout classroom to classroom we will begin to see more progress across the school.

I believe the rewards should be "school wide" meaning all deserving students get to participate. When we limit the participants at a certain number I believe that negatively affects the students' perception of the "fairness" of the program.

administration holds students accountable more

Have school wide rewards for ALL students that earn it. There should not be a cut off of total students eligible.

22-23 SY

**14. What do you believe can be done to better implement the school's SWPBIS?
(Please provide a response with 2-3 sentences).**

I need to do better at taking my stamp to cafeteria duty. However, I think the biggest problem is that staff is doing what we need to do. Admin is not talking it up to the students and helping with the program.

Just better PRIDE cards and more options in the PRIDE store.

I think the Committee's need to meet with just themselves as well as meeting with the entire Team , I think the committee's should meet once a month and then the Team as a whole should meet once a month with Sophia. I think this way there will be more ownership and accountability.

It would be nice for the students to be more excited about the program. All too often, students do not have a PRIDE card and tell me that they are not interested in receiving stamps.

The main issue I'm seeing is that many students, especially 8th graders, do not have PRIDE cards. They don't carry the cards with them or seem to have any interest in

<p>getting them from their homeroom teachers. It seems a large group of the 8th graders just aren't "buying into" the program.</p>
<p>As always we need more teachers participating in giving out the PBIS reward stamps on the student's PRIDE cards. Also, administration needs to continually talk up the prizes/incentives to the students, be it thru AM/PM announcements, lunchtime, hallways, buses, etc.</p>
<p>Through the implementation of a lot more school dances this year, we were also able to raise a lot of money to help cover the costs of our PBIS student store., and include extra at dances like photos, cost of DJ, 360 camera, etc.</p>
<p>The staff that is not on the PBIS needs to step-up and complete the program with fidelity. There are too many teachers who give up on positive reinforcement yet complain continuously. I think naming the program "mandatory" by administration would help tremendously.</p>
<p>Teachers need to be more diligent with giving stamp(myself included). There needs to be a way for students to keep better track of their cards. Probably 30% of my students have lost or don't care to get stamps. I believe there should be a larger monthly reward (within school day) to encourage SWPBIS. The quarterly field trip is great but it is limited to a certain number of students. A monthly reward would provide even more reinforcement of the program.</p>
<p>Administrator enforces school policies to help reduce student behaviors so that the SWPBIS works better.</p>
<p>I think that some teachers are still confused at when to give a "stamp." Personally, I need to remember to give more, but I am so swamped with the teaching overload that I am never thinking about it. If I had less to do, I would focus on it more.</p>
<p>As we discussed, rewarding all students that are eligible, not on a first come basis. We may need to rethink our large group rewards so we can include all kids.</p>
<p>Consistence from all of the personnel in the building. Also finding ways to motivate the students to want to behavior properly.</p>
<p>9 weeks reminder to staff and students....Remind them of the Matrix, etc.</p>

Staff responses regarding how to improve the SWPBIS program were important for this research. During the 2021-2022 school year, the implementation of the program was difficult as noted by staff responses. “SWPBIS should have been implemented from the start of the school year. But due to a lot of changes and COVID protocols, that didn’t happen until later” was one of the responses from a volunteer. Another teacher noted “I

think COVID played a huge part in our SWPBIS program as we got off to a late start.” Staff commitment was also a noted theme, with a total of eight out of the thirteen survey responses being related to staff being more involved with the SWPBIS program, to help with implementation and improvement. During the 2022-2023 school year, the responses were different, but still noted some of the same issues. A need for administrative support was a theme during the 2021-2022 survey with a response noting “administration holds students accountable more” being a way to better implement the SWPBIS program. During the 2022-2023 school year, a need for administrative support was mentioned in four of the responses (out of 13 participating staff members). Administrative support was specifically mentioned by a staff member who stated a need, “administrator enforces school policies to help reduce student behaviors so that the SWPBIS works better.” PRIDE cards and stamps are mentioned on the survey response multiple times, “teachers need to be more diligent with giving stamp (myself included).”

The SWPBIS Staff Interview data was the other piece of qualitative data used to answer the third research question. Interview questions 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 were specifically focused on understanding the staff members' perceptions of the SWPBIS program and its effectiveness. The first interview question, “*Has the SWPBIS matrix been reviewed each year that the program has been around?*” provides data regarding the staff members' understanding of the SWPBIS program. Of the 13 participants, all 13 noted that the SWPBIS program has been reviewed each year. The teachers noted the SWPBIS matrix being reviewed during beginning of the year faculty meeting, reoccurring faculty meetings, assemblies, SWPBIS meetings, SAP meetings, classroom lessons and Microsoft Teams meetings. “*Have the staff been properly trained on the SWPBIS*

program?” is the next research question that had a mixed response with eight yes responses, two no responses and two responses that had mixed feelings. For example, one interviewee noted that “we have been trained but not retrained” and another noting “at the beginning yes but since COVID, I’m going to say no.” Teachers then went on to explain the ways that staff have been trained noting some of the same responses about the matrix such as during faculty meetings, beginning of the year meeting, in-service days, Microsoft Teams and during reoccurring faculty meetings. One of the teachers that felt there was no training noted, that the training was mainly through the head teachers, teaching the staff about the PRIDE matrix.

An important question through the SWPBIS staff interview had to do with the SWPBIS curbing negative student behaviors (question four). Based upon the results of this question (four yes, four no and five mixed) the teacher perception of the program is very uncertain based upon the data. There is an even split between the teachers believing that the SWPBIS program has helped with negative behaviors, with the majority of the teachers (five) having mixed feelings between yes and no. One teacher noted how they have seen it help in certain situations, but then they have students that exhibit negative behaviors with no interest in the PRIDE rewards. Another teacher noted, “there is obviously a population of kids that it is never going to work because they just don’t care.” A common theme was that the SWPBIS program is not reaching more students who need it, “those demonstrating negative behaviors, previously in past year, are not participating in the program.” Teachers that noted the program has been effective have also noted how the program has not “worked as well as we hoped in the beginning” but not for “the frequent fliers, the top 5%” (three out of the four teachers who said yes).

“Has the SWPBIS program been implemented properly?” was the next interview question in relation to answering research question three. This interview question provided a consistent response from the teacher participants (eleven yes and two that were mixed). There was one response that was in relation to the third research question that noted “at the very beginning it was implemented properly, when the Watson Institute has ran the program.” Other teachers who said yes, noted the different beneficial parts of the program, data, the SWPBIS team and the success of the program even after going through the transition process of new principals over the last few years.

The sixth interview question, *“Have you personally seen a difference in your student’s behavior when you have implemented the program?”* displayed only a few mixed feelings between the teacher participants (nine saying yes). One teacher felt that “the good kids are the good kids and the bad kids are the bad kids.” Another who felt that they have not seen a difference utilizing the SWPBIS program noted students “just can’t keep their mouth shut and keep their hands to themselves.” The two teachers who had mixed feelings about the effectiveness of the program felt that it hasn’t worked as well as they would have liked, with one response being that “some kids care, some kids do not.”

The SWPBIS survey and interview research demonstrates an improvement in the teacher perception from the 2021-2022 to the 2022-2023 school year. Survey questions seven, nine and ten saw an improvement between the school years regarding implementing the program with fidelity, improvement in student behavior when issuing rewards and an improvement in the SWPBIS training. Survey questions six, eleven and twelve saw both an improvement and decrease regarding a strong understanding of the

SWPBIS program, areas of the building observed as improving and the consistency in which staff members issue the reward aspect of the program. There was no difference between the school years regarding the staff as a whole implementing the SWPBIS program to the best of their ability. Survey question 13, “How often have you observed your colleagues implementing the SWPBIS program” was the only question that saw a negative decline where two staff participants felt that they have not observed colleagues implementing the program very often.

Discussion

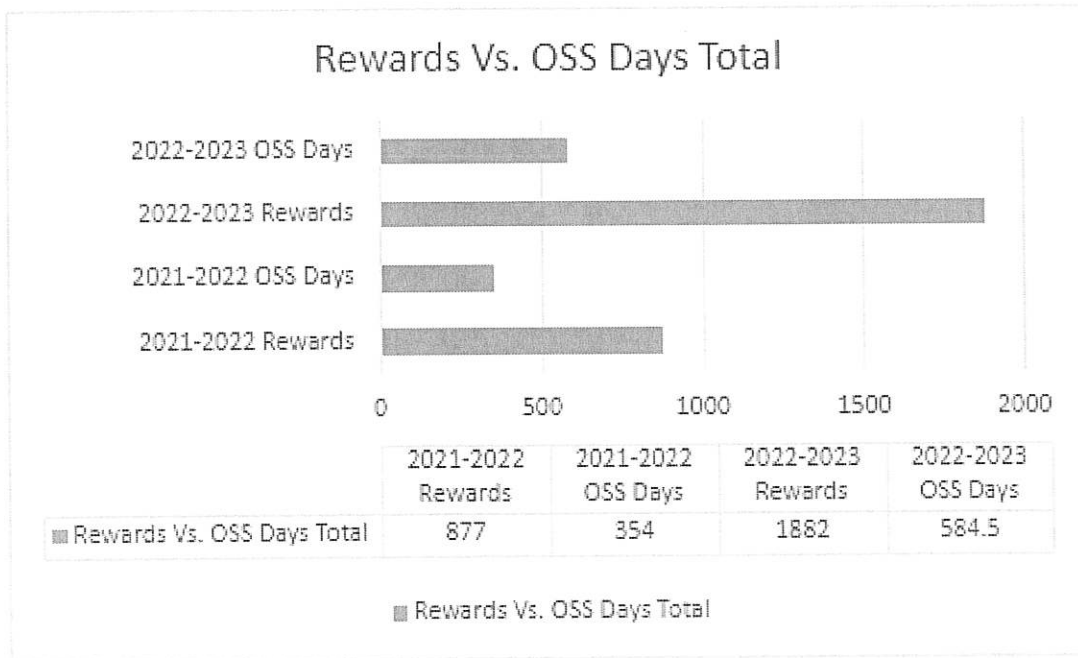
This action research study utilized a mixed methods approach focusing on qualitative and quantitative data analysis. Quantitative data incorporated into the research were SWPBIS rewards, out-of-school suspensions, School-Wide Evaluation Tool and School-Wide Benchmarks of Quality Scoring Form data. Qualitative data utilized in this action research study were SWPBIS Surveys and SWPBIS one-on-one interviews. There were a total of 13 staff participants in this action research study. As a whole, the goal with this study was to research staff perceptions in relation to OSS disciplinary data over the course of two school years. The 2021-2022 school year was the reintroduction of the SWPBIS program at the middle school, which provided baseline data for comparison during the 2022-2023 school year. A question to be answered was how the SWPBIS program impacted student behaviors, while reviewing staff perceptions.

To analyze the first research question, “*How does the current School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) program impact student behaviors reviewing rewards?*” a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data was used to answer this research question. The perceptions from the SWPBIS Staff Interview

provided qualitative data that was uncertain based upon teacher responses. The majority of teachers noted that the program was being implemented properly (eleven yes and two mixed), yet the majority also said that the program was not being implemented by all teachers with fidelity (nine no and two yes). The rewards were said to be successful by the majority (seven), but the rest had a mixture of yes and no feelings regarding its success (six). There was also a mixture of feelings regarding the SWPBIS program curbing negative student behaviors (four yes, four no and five mixed), but nine of the participants felt like they noticed a difference in their student's behavior when implementing the SWPBIS program (two no and two mixed). Finally, seven of the participants felt like other approaches to student discipline have worked better (five no and one mixed). On the other hand, the quantitative data is very clear that the SWPBIS rewards have increased from 2021-2022 to 2022-2023 school year, but so had the number of OSS (Figure 3). The staff also have a blend of feelings in relation to the SWPBIS rewards and how they have impacted student behaviors focusing on OSS.

Figure 3

Rewards Vs. OSS Days Total



To analyze the second research question, *“What impact does the SWPBIS program have on the number of out-of-school suspensions (OSS)?”* only quantitative data was used to answer the research question. The SET document in relation to OSS shows conflicting data. An improvement is that there is a “documented system for teaching behavioral expectations to students”, but there was a decrease in the number of staff that stated the students were taught the behavioral expectations. There was an improvement in the number of students who could “state 67% of the school rules/behavior expectations.” On the Benchmarks of Quality Scoring Form, the SWPBIS team noted multiple improvements from the 2021-2022 to the 2022-2023 school year in relation to student behaviors. “Major/minor behaviors are clearly differentiated” was noted as an

improvement, which should eliminate issues regarding students receiving an OSS for an issue that was not warranted. On a more significant improvement, from not in place and improving to in place, “suggested array of appropriate responses to major (office-managed) problem behaviors.” This again solidifies the improvement in responses for higher tier disciplinary issues that may result in an OSS. Rules being posted around the school building, rules linked to expectations and staff involvement with rules were all an improvement from not in place, to in place. Overall, the SWPBIS data in relation to student discipline shows an improvement, but in contrast the OSS quantitative data shows a significant increase of 230.5 days of OSS from 2021-2022 to the 2022-2023 school year.

To analyze the third research question, *“What is the middle school staff’s perception of the effectiveness of the SWPBIS program from year one to year two of implementation?”* only qualitative data was implemented to answer the research question. The SWPBIS Staff Interviews revealed data that was consistent with the survey data between the school years. The staff participants noted an improvement and a singular decrease of their understanding of the SWPBIS program on the survey with all interviewees saying that the SWPBIS matrix was reviewed during each year of the SWPBIS program. The interview and survey revealed that most staff felt like they received proper training of the SWPBIS program with the survey showing an improvement in the results during the second year of implementation. The effectiveness of the SWPBIS program curbing negative student behaviors was consistent between the survey and interview. Staff participants were able to detail out some of their concerns during the interview with five of them providing mixed feelings regarding their

experiences with the SWPBIS program and how it has impacted negative student behaviors. The survey and interview provided very different responses regarding the staff's perception on the SWPBIS program being implemented properly. The SWPBIS survey shows an improvement between the school years regarding that individual participant implementing the program with fidelity and consistent data from year to year about the staff as a whole. The interviews revealed that the eleven of the participants noted that the program has been implemented properly. The two participants who did not signify yes, had mixed feelings.

Summary

Chapter IV presented the results of this action research study, which included an analysis and discussion of the data to better understand how the SWPBIS program impacts student behaviors and staff perceptions. The mixed methods research design focused on understanding the correlation of staff perceptions (interview and survey data) while comparing that with student behaviors (SWPBIS and OSS data). More specifically, an important element of this research was to also gain a baseline of data post COVID-19 pandemic when the SWPBIS program was reintroduced to the students and staff (2021-2022 school year). Considering the COVID-19 hiatus, the SWPBIS program represented more of a year one implementation in this research due to the COVID-19 shutdown and restrictions during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school year. The triangulation of data was an important element to answering each research question with thorough detail and data. Chapter V will finalize this action research study by discussing the conclusions from the analyzed data results. Chapter V will also include limitations

and recommendations for future research to better understand all aspects of this research study and how improvements can be made in future research studies related to SWPBIS.

CHAPTER V

Conclusions and Recommendations

Chapter V will conclude the action research on the SWPBIS study that focused on quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis to answer the three research questions. The goal with the research was to provide mixed methods data to the researched middle school to help the school district make improvements to its SWPBIS program titled PRIDE. In turn, this would help to improve student discipline, as well as the overall school environment. This chapter will help to make final conclusions based upon the research, which will begin by concluding the effectiveness of the SWPBIS program utilizing the research results. Positive and negative impacts of the SWPBIS program will be reviewed and tangible improvements will be an element of focus during the conclusion. Limitations are a part of the research process and will be shared to understand its impact on the outcomes from the action research. Finally, recommendations will be the final concluding aspect of the SWPBIS research, to discuss ideas for related exploration that may be beneficial in future research.

The researched middle school is the only middle school within the school district located in Western Pennsylvania. The middle school's enrollment is 509 students with 52.5% of students being economically disadvantaged. This action research consisted of 13 staff participants, with the middle school having approximately 50 staff members. The SWPBIS program at the middle school was in its second year of reimplementation during the 2022-2023 school year. The original SWPBIS program was first implemented during the 2019-2020 school year but was on a hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic

and was not reinstated until the 2021-2022 school year. The study regarding the middle school's SWPBIS program utilized three research questions:

1. How does the current SWPBIS program impact student behaviors reviewing rewards?
2. What impact does the SWPBIS program have on the number of out-of-school suspensions?
3. What is the middle school staff's perception of the effectiveness of the SWPBIS program from year one to year two of implementation?

The quantitative data collected and analyzed to answer the research questions was disciplinary and SWPBIS data. The research specifically incorporated OSS, rewards, SET and School-Wide Benchmarks data. The qualitative data implemented during this action research was in the form of two staff surveys and a one-on-one interview with the 13 staff participants. The surveys provided data from both the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year, while the interview (conducted in the 2022-2023 school year) was focused on better understanding staff perceptions in relation to the middle school's SWPBIS program. Overall, Chapter V will provide final details regarding the research conclusions, limitations, recommendations for future research and then provide a summary to finalize the action research study focusing on SWPBIS.

Conclusions

The SWPBIS program at the middle school was integrated into the school with a focus on improving student discipline and also the culture of the school. During the 2021-2022 school year, the SWPBIS program was reimplemented after being on a hiatus

for over a year (COVID-19). This action research study was executed to achieve two important tasks. First, the research was focused on understanding the staff perceptions of the SWPBIS program over the course of two school years (2020-2021 and 2022-2023). One goal with this study is to understand if the SWPBIS program has improved the culture of the school (specifically focusing on middle school staff members). Next, the study focused on how the SWPBIS program impacted student behaviors, specifically out-of-school suspensions. The researched middle school has experienced a high number of disciplinary infractions that have equated to out-of-school suspensions. Another goal with this study is to understand if the SWPBIS program has improved student behaviors, specifically OSS.

Research Question 1

The first research question, *“How does the current SWPBIS program impact student behaviors reviewing rewards?”* analyzed OSS and rewards (quantitative) data from the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year, as well as one-on-one interviews (qualitative) to answer the question. The OSS data was collected during the first 135 school days (end of the 3rd 9 weeks) for each school year. The days are important to note because the data provides consistency for comparison purposes between each school year. The OSS data during each school year was organized by OSS levels (one-day, two-day, three-day, ten-day, ½-day, 4-day and 5-day). The ½-day, 4-day and 5-day OSS were only implemented during the 2022-2023 school year. The total OSS data analysis provided the days suspended per level, total number of suspensions and total number of suspension days. The data shows a drastic increase in suspension days in each category going from the 2021-2022 to the 2022-2023 school year. During the 2021-2022 school

year, there were a total of 354 total days of OSS (170 total OSS incidents) and during the 2022-2023 school year there were a total of 584.5 total days of OSS (252 total OSS incidents). The rewards data was collected by the same head teacher at the middle school during both school years. The data was collected from the beginning of each school year, until the end of March. The rewards data was compiled to show each month's total rewards and then a total from September until the end of March. During the 2021-2022 school year, there were a total of 877 rewards and during the 2022-2023 school year, there were a total of 1,882 rewards. There were 1,005 more rewards issued during the 2022-2023 school year. The overall quantitative data comparison shows that the number of rewards issued have no direct impact on the student behaviors that lead to suspendable (OSS) offenses. The data clearly shows a major increase in the amount of SWPBIS rewards issued (1,005 more), but a major increase in the number of OSS issued (230.5 days more).

The qualitative data to help answer this research question was in the form of a one-on-one interview (13 total participants) during the 2022-2023 school year. The SWPBIS Staff Interview used notes and a recording of the interview for accuracy. The data from the staff interviews focused on the staff's perception on how the SWPBIS rewards have impacted student behaviors. Questions 3-6 were specifically focused on answering the first research question. The results were conclusive with the perception of rewards with seven staff members noting the rewards' effectiveness and six having mixed feelings of yes and no. The perceptions from staff were mainly positive as far as the SWPBIS program being successful in curbing negative student behaviors. The staff felt that they personally saw a difference in student behavior (only two stating no) and then

mainly felt that the program as a whole has helped to curve negative student behaviors (four stating no). Therefore, the quantitative data regarding the effectiveness of SWPBIS rewards impacting student behaviors showed that there is clearly no positive effect on rewards decreasing the amount of OSS. The qualitative data was shown to have a majority of the staff perceptions positive when it comes to the effectiveness of rewards and its ability to curve negative student behaviors.

The data can be used by the stakeholders of the middle school to make improvements to the SWPBIS program. One of the goals with a SWPBIS program is to decrease overall disciplinary issues. Based upon the mixed methods data, the quantitative data is telling that there is no correlation between issuing rewards and seeing a decrease in the number of OSS. The qualitative data also shows mixed feelings of the SWPBIS program being able to help support negative student behaviors. The SWPBIS team should utilize this data to make improvements to its reward process. By refining this process, the SWPBIS program may improve the results (rewards to OSS ratio) if the students are receiving rewards based upon a more specific standard of proper behavior.

Research Question 2

The second research question, “*What impact does the SWPBIS program have on the number of out-of-school suspensions?*” analyzed quantitative data only in the form of OSS and SWPBIS data (SET and School-Wide Benchmarks of Quality Scoring Form) to answer the question. Again, the OSS data was collected during the first 135 days of school in both the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year. The OSS data by itself demonstrates a significant increase of 230.5 more OSS days between the school years. The SET data demonstrates conflicting information focusing on the behavioral

components of the tool. The overall summary score for each school year was an exact 88% with a total of six categories that were different between the school years. When focusing on section B. Behavioral Expectations Taught, there was an equivalent total score of six per school year, even with the differences. This section of the SET had the highest number of differences with the scores with four of the sections changing between the years. The data is inconclusive with this research question due to the data being different, but balanced between the years. The results signified an improvement in the behavioral expectations and understanding with students, but decreased with the behavioral expectations and understanding in relation to staff. Finally, the School-Wide Benchmarks of Quality Scoring Form was completed by the same consultant from the Watson Institute during the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year. The team benchmarks score slightly decreased by 4% from the 2021-2022 (80%) to the 2022-2023 (76%) school year. The coach benchmark score by the consultant from the Watson Institute was exactly the same with a score of 81 out of 107 total points (75%). The data provided from the School-Wide Benchmarks of Quality Scoring Form in relation to student behaviors shows an improvement from the 2021-2022 to the 2022-2023 school year. Therefore, the quantitative data on the impact that the SWPBIS program has on the number of OSS does not show any correlation between the effectiveness of an SWPBIS program and its impact to decreasing the number of OSS. The OSS data shows an overall increase across the board when reviewing each category between the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year. The SWPBIS data shows that the SET was the exact same score between the school years and provided data that showed an improvement regarding student preparedness in relation to behavioral expectations. In correlation, the SWPBIS

data from the School-Wide Benchmarks of Quality Scoring Form also showed improvements specifically in relation to student behaviors. Both of these SWPBIS data forms suggest that the students are more prepared and knowledgeable regarding behavior expectations during the 2022-2023 school year, but that it did not positively impact the amount of OSS considering the 1.6 times increase between the school years.

The quantitative data can be used by stakeholders in an effective way to make improvements to the behavior expectations portion of the SWPBIS program. The OSS data was again used, but this time in correlation with two important SWPBIS forms of data (SET and School-Wide Benchmarks of Quality Scoring Form). The SET and scoring form data were slightly different between the years, but the focus on behavioral expectations (students and staff) should be a focus for the SWPBIS team in the future. The SWPBIS team should work with the school administration to focus more on educating the staff regarding behavioral expectations since that is where the decrease lies on the SWPBIS quantitative data.

Research Question 3

The third research question, *“What is the middle school staff’s perception of the effectiveness of the SWPBIS program from year one to year two of implementation?”* analyzed qualitative data only in the form of survey research and one-on-one interviews to answer the question. The SWPBIS Staff Survey was implemented during both school years (2021-2022 and 2022-2023). The first survey focused on data from the 2021-2022 school year and was completed in November of 2022 with 13 staff participants. The second survey focused on data from the 2022-2023 school year and was completed in March of 2023. Both surveys contained the same 14 questions, with 13 of them being

multiple choice and the final question being an open-ended response. Questions 6-14 on the survey were collected to answer the third research question. The SWPBIS Staff Interview was only incorporated during the 2022-2023 school year in March of 2023. Questions 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 specifically were collected to answer the third research question.

The results from the SWPBIS Staff Survey showed that the staff participants perception is that the SWPBIS program has improved from year one to year two of implementation. Out of the eight multiple choice questions, four of the responses showed an improvement during the 2022-2023 school year. The improvements were in staff comprehension, fidelity, improvement in student behavior and improvement in the training of the SWPBIS program. Data regarding participants feeling that the staff as a whole implementing the program to the best of their ability was exactly the same. The three decreases in results between the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year was regarding participants providing rewards, observing colleague's implementation and the areas of the building where participants have seen a difference in student behavior regarding the SWPBIS program. The decrease regarding rewards and colleague implementation is interesting because there was evidence of a major increase in rewards during the 2022-2023 school year (1,005 more rewards). The open-ended survey question, question 14, provided qualitative data that showed an improvement regarding the program itself, but noted administration support and staff consistency as negatives when implementing the SWPBIS program. Staff consistency did show an improvement from being part of a response eight times during the 2021-2022 school year, decreasing to six times during the 2022-2023 school year. The feedback from year one to year two

from the open-ended question did not provide any major findings. The SWPBIS Staff Interview did not provide any compelling data regarding teacher perceptions from year one to year two of implementation. The review of the SWPBIS program was consistent between school years. Staff felt that they have been trained, but not retrained (one staff member noted since COVID). Regarding student behaviors, nothing was notable between the school years, but the majority did feel that they saw improvements in negative student behaviors in general. As far as implementation, it was consistent that the program was implemented properly with staff even mentioning the improvements of the program over time. Overall, the SWPBIS Staff Survey provided information showing improvements in staff perception from year one to year two of implementation. The SWPBIS Staff Interview did not provide substantial information regarding the staff perceptions from year to year, but instead displayed consistency of SWPBIS implementation between the school years.

The qualitative data from the final research question can be used by the SWPBIS team to understand the perceptions of the PRIDE program amongst their peers. The data is promising, since it displays that the staff had a perception that the program has improved from year one to year two. This is important because other data in this action research shows differing results. OSS has increased by 230.5 days, even though the SWPBIS rewards issued have increased by 1,005 between the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year. The SET remained stagnant at 88% and the scoring of the Benchmarks of Quality remained the same at 75% (coach score) and decreased 4% (team score) between the school years. The qualitative data from this research is important for the SWPBIS team at the middle school because it displays that the staff have still maintained a positive

disposition of the program. Even though the quantitative data displays negative or stagnant results between the school years, staff have still noted its improvement.

Limitations

There were three limitations that impacted the results of this action research study. The first limitation had to do with the COVID-19 pandemic and the mixed methods data from the 2021-2022 school year. The COVID-19 pandemic was difficult on the entire country during the shutdown in March of 2019. The 2019-2020 and the 2020-2021 school year was atypical of how a school should operate its educational and social practices. With this research, the SWPBIS was restarted during the 2021-2022 school year, which means that the PRIDE program had a hiatus of nothing SWPBIS related for more than a school year.

The second limitation coincides with the first limitation, which was the constant change in middle school administration. Not only was COVID a limiting factor, but the position at the middle school had changed three times since the inception of the SWPBIS program that was initially started during the 2019-2020 school year. The researcher was the acting principal during the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year and reimplemented the SWPBIS program, even with limited resources and time. The school district was going through the interview process for a new middle school principal and the PRIDE program was not properly planned considering the transition and hiring process that began in the summer prior to the 2021-2022 school year. The new middle school principal hiring process did not end until the official hiring of a principal during the second nine weeks of the 2021-2022 school year (approximately 12 weeks into the school year). The first two limitations directly impacted one another. COVID was a

limiting factor that halted the progress of the SWPBIS program. When the program was finally restarted, it did not have the proper amount of time, planning or resources to begin the correct way due to another change in school administration at the middle school. As the acting principal, the researcher was able to reimplement the SWPBIS program during the start of the 2021-2022 school year, but it was executed in two waves to buy the SWPBIS team time to get the program up and running the correct way.

The third and final limitation had to do with the staff participants. When the researcher began as the assistant principal during the 2019-2020 school year, a major part of the kickoff of the SWPBIS program was that it was intended to be school-wide. This meant that staff members as a whole were an important part of the process since the PRIDE program was not meant to only take place in the classroom. Instead, the program involved a SWPBIS matrix to include all of the areas of a school that students experience during their school day, including the classroom, hallway, cafeteria, restroom, bus, office and assembly. When the researcher began the action research, he made multiple attempts to get any staff member to join the SWPBIS research. In the end, there were a total of 13 participants that all ended up being teachers within the middle school building. The middle school building employs around 50 total staff members and having different positions within the building would have helped the research data be more authentic from different staff member perspectives. Another note regarding the staff participants is that the middle school head teachers are also the leaders in the school building regarding the SWPBIS program, as well as other initiatives. Both of these teachers are also part of the action research and are highly respected in the school. This may have influenced some of

the participants since they know how much time, effort and energy both put into the implementation and sustainability of the SWPBIS program at the middle school.

Overall, limitations are a part of research. This action research study contained three main limitations that influenced the results. The goal with noting these limitations is to help guide future research on SWPBIS at the secondary level. The researcher aimed to answer the three research questions through mixed methods methodology and was able to answer each question while also noting several limitations. In the end, there were certain aspects of the research that did impact the interpretation of the findings on SWPBIS, but recommendations for future research can help to make improvements to upcoming studies regarding the same topic.

Recommendations for Future Research

The results and conclusions of this action research study helped to answer the three predetermined research questions. The goal was to understand how the SWPBIS program at the middle school impacted out-of-school suspensions utilizing other quantitative data through SWPBIS data (SWPBIS rewards, SET, School-Wide Benchmarks of Quality Scoring Form). Since the research used mixed methods, the study also included the collection and analyzing of qualitative data through two staff surveys and a staff interview to better understand the perceptions of the participants regarding the effectiveness of the SWPBIS program. As a whole, this research helped to generate ideas on how future research can be improved regarding the implementation and improvement of a SWPBIS program at the secondary level.

Future research on SWPBIS could focus on including a variety of staff members to participate in the research study. A SWPBIS program is meant to be school-wide and focus on supporting students following the SWPBIS program's matrix around the entire school building (classroom, hallway, cafeteria, restroom, bus, office and etc....). Including teachers, paraprofessionals, café workers, secretaries and other support staff in the research would help to generate strong qualitative data in any research study. Having a higher number of staff member participants would help to clarify certain discrepancies when it comes to understanding the perceptions of staff regarding the effectiveness of a SWPBIS program. Different perspectives would also help to better understand the correlation between quantitative and qualitative data. Future research, including a higher percentage of staff members with a variety of roles, would help to improve the quality of the collected qualitative data and overall enhance the data utilized to answer research questions.

The implementation of the qualitative research may help to improve the accuracy of the results in future research. When implementing surveys and/or interviews, future research should collect the data during the respective year, which would help to keep the information accurate in a research study. Ideally, a survey and/or interview regarding an SWPBIS program should take place towards the end of a school year (around the fourth nine weeks). This would ensure that the staff member participants have had ample time to implement and observe the program before giving their responses on how the SWPBIS program has performed. Implementing a survey/interview during the respective school year would provide the researcher with accurate data that is specific to the performance of a SWPBIS program during the given year.

A quantitative data component of SWPBIS research to be improved in future studies would be the rewards portion of the SWPBIS program. A main component of a SWPBIS program is the rewards segment. When conducting research, detail is a valuable tool to support a study. Future research should consider organizing and collecting data on rewards that focuses on different levels of achievement. For example, reward data could be compiled by the number of tickets or stamps that it takes for a student to earn that specific reward. This would provide the researcher with a total number of rewards and also different levels based upon the number of tickets or stamps it takes the student to earn it. This research data could in turn help the study to understand the value of rewards as a total number and the value regarding the reward levels in a SWPBIS program.

Disciplinary data is an area that could be expanded in future research to include other consequences when researching a SWPBIS program. School discipline comes in different levels or tiers based upon the negative student behavior. Lower tiered issues may result in a lower consequence such as a lunch detention or an after school detention. Middle tiered issues may result in multiple after school detentions or even up to an in-school suspension. The upper tiered issue would result in some form of exclusion, which could be an ISS, OSS or a long-term exclusion such as an expulsion. A research study examining the effectiveness of a SWPBIS program regarding student behaviors may benefit from including different tiers of discipline. By implementing this portion of a research study, one would be able to understand the impact of the SWPBIS program on all levels of behaviors. In turn, this data could help a SWPBIS team better understand its program and how to make adjustments to target the different tiers of discipline.

The final recommendation for future research focuses on studying the staff members involved in the SWPBIS program. Specifically, the role of the principal and the importance of staff member buy-in in a SWPBIS program. A principal is the leader of a school building and support from them could make or break any program. On the other spectrum, staff members are the ones who actually implement a program on a day-to-day basis and may have a much larger impact on the success of a program. Conducting future research to better understand a principal's role and staff member buy-in regarding the success of a SWPBIS program may help to understand a program's effectiveness from the top down. The results from this research will provide schools with concrete data to help guide their SWPBIS program in relation to how their principal and staff may better support the SWPBIS team and program.

Summary

This action research study on SWPBIS at the middle school level served to provide the SWPBIS team, school, and other interested schools with mixed methods data to help improve a SWPBIS program. The goal in this research was to specifically understand if a SWPBIS positively impacts school discipline (OSS) and the staff perceptions of the effectiveness of the program. Another layer of the research was if the program improved from year one to year two of implementation, post the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of the quantitative and qualitative data present the following conclusions:

1. The SWPBIS program, specifically the rewards portion, does not have any impact on improving the OSS numbers. The data suggests that the rewards data has significantly increased, while the OSS data has also had a spike in incidents and

- days. On the other hand, the one-on-one interview data indicated that the staff had a positive perception of the program regarding improving student behaviors.
2. The SWPBIS program, as a whole, does not have a positive impact on improving the OSS numbers. This is evident by the OSS and SWPBIS data (SET and School-Wide Benchmarks of Quality Scoring Form). The data suggests that the students comprehend the behavior expectations, but that does not equate to an improvement in the number of OSS incidents and/or days.
 3. The middle school staff perception is that the SWPBIS program has improved from year one to year two of implementation, which is evident from the staff survey results. The staff interviews did not provide any substantial data, but instead displayed consistency through both school years.

This action research study provided useful qualitative and quantitative data for the researcher and other interested stakeholders. The data will help the researched middle school's SWPBIS program and other school's programs to make adjustments and improvements to progressing overall practices. Based upon the findings, the SWPBIS program at the middle school displays a lot of strengths, but also weaknesses that can be addressed to help improve the learning environment for the students and staff. This action research study also served as important research due to the SWPBIS program and research occurring at the middle school level to focus on improving OSS and the overall school environment. Other research will hopefully take place in the future and use the important elements of this action research to make improvements to their SWPBIS program and the research being conducted. Lastly, this action research has provided a data focused platform for the SWPBIS program at the researched middle school and other

schools to make improvements following a mixed methods approach. The goal with any research is to collect legitimate data and use that data to make improvements.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SWPBIS PRIDE Matrix

P.R.I.D.E MATRIX Rules and Expectations!							
	Classroom	Hallway	Cafeteria	Restroom	Bus	Office	Assembly
Productive	Be prepared	Walk on the right	Stay in assigned seat	Flush	Stay in seat.	Enter with a pass or permission only	Follow directions
	Be on time	Hands to yourself	Eat in a timely manner	Wash	Take all your items		Sit Appropriately (Feet on the floor)
	Clean up your space			Pitch		Wait your turn	
Respect	Pay attention	Go directly to class	Clean up your area	Be efficient	Get off only at assigned stop	Use appropriate tone, volume, and language	Remain quiet
	Participate	Use appropriate volume	Hands to yourself	Be considerate of peers	Keep hands and feet to self		Pay attention
	Use kind words	Use kind words		Use quiet voice			
Integrity	Always walk	Walk in hallways	Always walk	Feet on floor	Listen to the bus driver	Be considerate of office staff	Be considerate
	Hands and feet to yourself	Hands and feet to yourself	Keep items in your space	Always walk	Stay seated		Wait patiently
	Stay in your seat			Clean up after yourself			
Determination	Do your best	Get to class by second bell	Be kind to your peers	Get in and get out	Report any unsafe or disrespectful behaviors	Be efficient with your time	Use good manners
	Seek help						
Excellence	Offer to help others	Set a good example	Use good manners	Set a good example	Set a good example	Say Please and Thank You	Set a good example
	Complete all work	No phones	Say Please and Thank You	Report any poor behaviors			Set a good example

APPENDIX B

Institutional Review Board Approval



**Institutional Review Board
250 University Avenue
California, PA 15419
instreviewboard@calu.edu
Melissa Sovak, Ph.D.**

Dear David,

Please consider this email as official notification that your proposal titled “Impact of School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) Focusing on Staff Perceptions and Student Behaviors” (Proposal #PW22-003) has been approved by the Pennsylvania Western University Institutional Review Board as submitted.

The effective date of approval is 08/04/2022 and the expiration date is 08/03/2023. These dates must appear on the consent form.

Please note that Federal Policy requires that you notify the IRB promptly regarding any of the following:

- (1) Any additions or changes in procedures you might wish for your study (additions or changes must be approved by the IRB before they are implemented)
- (2) Any events that affect the safety or well-being of subjects
- (3) Any modifications of your study or other responses that are necessitated by any events reported in (2).
- (4) To continue your research beyond the approval expiration date of 08/03/2023, you must file additional information to be considered for continuing review. Please contact instreviewboard@calu.edu

Please notify the Board when data collection is complete.

Regards,

Melissa Sovak, PhD.
Chair, Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX C

Research Consent Form



Dear Faculty Member,

As a contracted educational professional at the middle school, you are being asked to participate in a research study on the impact of School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (SWPBIS) focusing on staff perceptions and student behaviors. Your participation in this study will help the researcher learn more about how you perceive the SWPBIS PRIDE program at the middle school and the effectiveness of the program utilizing qualitative and quantitative data (mixed methods research). The overall goal is to evaluate the effectiveness of the program in accordance with how the staff members at the middle school perceive the program in conjunction with disciplinary data.

What will I be asked to do if I take part in this study?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete two (2) Microsoft Forms electronic survey questionnaires during the 2022-2023 school year and participate in one (1) interview during the third 9 weeks of the 2022-2023 school year.

The first survey will be regarding the 2021-2022 school year and will be conducted at the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year. The second survey will be the same exact survey but will have the focus on collecting data for the 2022-2023 school year and will be conducted during the third 9 weeks of the 2022-2023 school year. The interviews will ask questions regarding demographic data to compile data regarding your educational background and questions regarding your perceptions of the SWPBIS program at the middle school.

Where will this study take place?

Both surveys will be available via an online survey tool (Microsoft Forms) using a secure website. Interviews will occur through an online meeting via Zoom. Interviewer and interviewee will conduct interview in a confidential/locked area to ensure privacy with any material.

How long will the study last?

The study is projected to last approximately seven months. The study will include two surveys regarding the SWPBIS program at the middle school. It will also include an interview. Total participation time will vary. The surveys may take up to 10-15 minutes each or 20-30 minutes total to complete. Each interview is expected to take between 20-30 minutes.

What happens if I don't want to participate?

Your participation is voluntary; you can choose whether you want to participate in the research study or not. There will be no penalty if you choose not to participate.

Can I quit the study before it ends?

You can withdraw from the research study at any point by notifying the researcher. There will be no penalty should you choose to withdraw. The researcher will not ask you why you opted to withdraw.

What are the risks?

There are minimal risks to this study. You will not be asked questions of a sensitive nature. The survey and interview questions may make you feel uncomfortable as some people do not like to volunteer information/feedback that could be perceived as negative or complaining. However, participants are reminded that they are not required to answer any questions of which they choose. Participants can also stop their participation at any time without question.

How will I benefit from participating?

If you decide to be in this study, you will assist the researcher and school district in better understanding the current perceptions of staff at the middle school regarding the SWPBIS program and may see improvement in the behavior and academic achievement for its students.

Will my responses be kept confidential and private?

Yes, the survey data and interview responses collected from you will be kept confidential, which means only the researcher will see or have access to it. Your survey responses will be anonymous as well. No names will be reported in the report of the findings. Data will be stored on a secure server and password protected. The Zoom interview will be conducted in a confidential/locked room to ensure privacy. The interview will also be recorded. The interview notes and recorded video will be kept saved on a secure server and password protected.

Who do I contact if I have questions about this study?

If you have questions about this study, please contact the researcher, David Turk, at Tur3238@pennwest.edu or at XXX-XXX-XXXX. If you would like to speak with someone other than the researcher, please contact Dr. Mary Wolf, Assistant Professor at California University of Pennsylvania (PennWest University), at wolf@pennwest.edu. *I have read this form. Any questions I have about participating in this study have been answered. I agree to take part in this study, and I understand that taking part is voluntary. I do not have to take part if I do not wish to do so. I can stop at any time for any reason. If I choose to stop, no one will ask me why.*

By signing below, I agree to participate in this study. By doing so, I am indicating that I have read this form and had my questions answered. I understand that it is my choice to participate and I can stop at any time. Signing will also indicate that I agree to participate in an interview that will be recorded.

Signature: _____ Date: _____
Approved by the PennWest University Institutional Review Board. This approval is effective
08/04/2022 and expires 08/03/2023.

APPENDIX D

SWPBIS Staff Perceptions Survey

1. Which grade level do you teach at the middle school? (Check all that apply)
 - o 6th grade
 - o 7th grade
 - o 8th grade

2. What is your teaching/supporting content area? (Circle one)
 - a. Math
 - b. Science
 - c. Social Studies
 - d. ELA
 - e. Electives

3. How many years have you been in education? (Circle one)
 - a. 0-5
 - b. 6-10
 - c. 11-15
 - d. 16-20
 - e. 21+

4. What is your gender? (Circle one)
 - a. Male
 - b. Female

5. How many disciplinary infractions do you submit per week? (Circle one)
 - a. 0-2
 - b. 3-5
 - c. 6-8
 - d. More than 8

6. I believe that I have a strong understanding of the school's SWPBIS program. (Circle one)
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Agree
 - d. Strongly Agree

7. I believe that I have implemented the SWPBIS program with fidelity. (Circle one)
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Agree
 - d. Strongly Agree

8. I believe that the staff as a whole is implementing the SWPBIS program to the best of their ability. (Circle one)

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Agree
- d. Strongly Agree

9. I have seen a difference in student behavior whenever I implement the reward portion of the SWPBIS program. (Circle one)

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Agree
- d. Strongly Agree

10. How would you rate the training that you received to help you to effectively implement the SWPBIS program? (Circle one)

- a. Poor
- b. Below Average
- c. Average
- d. Above Average
- e. Excellent

11. I have seen a difference in student behavior in the following areas when implementing the SWPBIS program. (Please check all that apply)

- Classroom
- Hall
- Cafeteria
- Homeroom

12. When using the SWPBIS system, how often do you provide the reward aspect of the program? (Circle one)

- a. Never
- b. Not very often
- c. Sometimes
- d. Most of the time
- e. Always

13. How often have you observed your colleagues implementing the SWPBIS program? (Circle one)

- a. Never
- b. Not very often
- c. Sometimes
- d. Most of the time
- e. Always

14. What do you believe can be done to better implement the school's SWPBIS? (Please provide a response with 2-3 sentences).

APPENDIX E

SWPBIS Staff Interview

One-on-One Interview Questions:

1. Has the SWPBIS matrix been reviewed each year that the program has been around?
 - a. If so, what details can you provide on the review?
 - b. If not, was the matrix presented in a different manner as a review?
2. Have the staff been properly trained on the SWPBIS program?
 - a. Why or why not?
 - b. What are the ways the staff have been trained?
3. What are the rewards used for the SWPBIS program and have they been successful?
 - a. Are the students interested in the rewards? Why or why not?
 - b. Have other rewards been tried? Were they successful, or why not?
4. Do you believe that the SWPBIS program has helped to curve negative student behaviors?
 - a. Why or why not?
 - b. Have there been other approaches to handling student discipline that have worked better?
5. Has the SWPBIS program been implemented properly?
 - a. Do all teachers/staff members implement the program with fidelity?
 - b. Are there reasons why staff members do not implement the program?

6. Have you personally seen a difference in your student's behavior when you have implemented the SWPBIS program?

- a. Why or why not?
- b. What changes in a student's behavior have you seen when you have experienced success with the program?

***Other questions will be asked that are directly related to the topic that may arise as a result of discussion.