The Effect of a School-Wide Positive Behavior Program on Student Discipline Frequency and School Climate of Students and Staff

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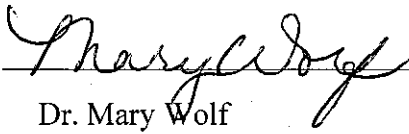
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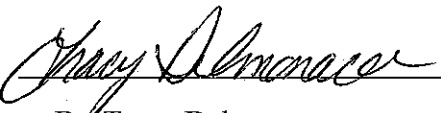
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Dedication

To my wife, Kristy, who has been my constant support through this process. I love you and would not be the person I am today without you by my side. To my kids, Mila and Quinton, work hard enough to attain what you desire in life. I hope that I set enough of an example for you to see that anything is possible. Mom and dad, I owe so much to you and the example you set for me in all phases of my life. Lastly, to those from all different parts of life who were instrumental in setting me down this path, thank you for believing in me even when I did not see this potential in myself, 714.

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Abstract

The purpose of this action research study was to analyze the effect that the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan had on the number of discipline referrals that were submitted to the principal's office and the effect that the plan had on the overall school climate at Hasson Height Elementary School. The study utilized a mixed-methods approach, using surveys, interviews, as well as numerical data gathered from the school's student information system. The survey used Likert-scale questions about the student's perceptions about their school, teachers, other students, and themselves. The interviews consisted of open-ended questions developed by the researcher to gain the staff's perception on the program, the staff's interpretation of the students' perceptions and the staffs' perception on how the community feels about the program. The quantitative data was collected from the student information system on the number of discipline referrals that were submitted involving students' interaction with other students, students' interactions with staff members, and discipline on transportation. The data was analyzed together to determine the effectiveness of the program and its impact on the school climate. The research suggested that the program had a minimal impact on the discipline referrals. The staff has indicated that the school climate is positive and the School-Wide Positive Behavior was a large component of that.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

School-Wide Positive Behavior plans have been implemented into a number of school buildings over the past decade. This wide-spread implementation led to developing such a program in at Hasson Heights Elementary School. Further research is warranted to see how effective the program is in reference to the number of discipline referrals coming into the principal's office. Further research is needed to see how the program is affecting the makeup of the building, which will be referred to as the "school climate."

Background

The administration and school leaders were looking for a systematic approach to the discipline at our building. Each school year, students in our building were learning a new set of expectations, wasting time that would be spent elsewhere. Our building needed a program that would enable everyone, staff and students alike, to have ownership of what the expectations were and how we celebrate those students that were doing what was expected. Through the development of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan, we were able to collect a plethora of feedback from the staff as to what the entire school community wanted to see happen. Through a lot of time and effort, the committee created for this program came up with a school-wide plan that worked to emphasize the positive things that were happening in the school and create a simple set of expectations that all the students could follow.

The 2023-2024 school year marked the second year that our school has been recognized by the state of Pennsylvania as an official School-Wide Positive Behavior School. To assess the progress and effectiveness of the program the last 2 years, my team collected data to compare the 2023-2024 discipline referrals being submitted to the office with previous years' data. The team focused on referrals made for altercations between students and between students and staff so that the school-wide expectations to "treat others with respect" could be measured. Therefore, the first part of the research will be to compare the average number of write-ups from interactions like this from the three years prior to the programs implementation, to the current 2023-2024 school year. This will give us an idea if the students are responding to the programing as intended in its design.

Additional data was collected to understand the teachers' perspectives of the positive behavior program. For this program to work to its potential the people administering the expectations to the students in the classrooms need to believe in what we are trying to accomplish. The positive behavior program is truly a systematic approach to behavior and it takes everyone being on the same page. If teachers' perceptions are that this program is doing more harm than good, then there are major changes that need to be made. If their perceptions are in favor of what we are doing within the building, then we can continue to build upon the foundation that is already established.

When the buildings in the district returned to full face-to-face instruction in the 2021-2022 school year, it was obvious that something needed to be done with our behavior at a systematic level. Therefore, the assistant principal and myself created a committee at the building level to come up with a system that we felt would work best for

the students and the staff. That is when we led the staff in the development of a School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan that we felt was simple and effective enough to make a difference in the undesirable behaviors that we were experiencing.

Capstone Focus

As the principal of the building it is important to have a finger on the pulse of the individuals that are working alongside me. Interviews were conducted with the students and staff after we completed the first year of the new positive behavior plan. During this time, we were also working with the Intermediate Unit to receive accreditation from the Pennsylvania Department of Education for our program. The responses from the interviews were shocking as some respondents indicated they did not know what the school's acronym stood for nor how to access the matrices that showed the progress of discipline. Due to this overall lack of understanding by the students and staff, we did not receive accreditation during the 2021-2022 school year.

At this point the committee understood that it needed to put more leg work in so that the staff and the students understood what the purpose of this new way of thinking was, and we set out at the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year to do that. From the very beginning we developed lessons and activities that the students participated in while at lunch or during non-instructional activities that were taking place in the building. These lessons helped reinforce the behaviors that we were trying to encourage. As the school year continued we continued lessons like this with the students paired with virtual flyers and other documents that we sent out to the staff of the building to help them understand the "why" of what we were doing.

Getting the validation from the Pennsylvania Department of Education at the end of that second year felt outstanding after falling short the year before. The plan that was originally adopted was resonating within the student body as well as the staff. Since that moment I have wanted to know more information about how "well" the program was actually working. That is why digging deeper and comparing data of student discipline referrals from before the School-Wide Plan was adopted to what the school had been receiving over this last school year. I also want to receive some real perspective from the students and staff. What are their thoughts on this program, is it helping, are we coddling too much, is it still more of the same? This is what drove me to use this as my focus for my capstone project.

Research Questions

The previous reflection led me to these three research questions.

1. How has the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan affected the number of discipline referrals including referrals on the bus, incidents between students against students, and incidents between students and staff?

2. How has the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan impacted the school climate from the perspective of the staff in grades kindergarten through four?

3. How has the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan impacted the school climate from the perspective of the students in grades three and four?

Expected Outcomes

My team and I were hopeful that the results of the data comparison would show that our program was having positive results. The 'hopeful' expected outcome, therefore, was a decrease of disciplinary referrals. The 'hopeful' expected outcome, therefore, was a decrease of discipline referrals coming into the principal's office and the staff and students all believe that the program is improving the climate of the building. The more realistic outcome of the research was gaining information that would aide in future decisions making. Receiving students' and staff members' perceptions was important moving forward and would aide in decisions we would make to help improve the programming for future students and staff members.

Fiscal Implications

This program is funded through our Home and School Committee. Therefore, there is not any additional fiscal implication on the school, staff, or community in any way.

Summary

The student and staff perspectives on the programming is more important than the data associated with the number of disciplinary referrals. Once the committee has obtained these perspectives, they can make informed decisions in the future and help the program thrive. I conducted research from a multitude of different angles to gain an understanding of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plans and its effects on student discipline and school climate. The research can be seen in the literature review that follows this chapter.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Plans have become so commonly used that it has almost become cliché. It seems very obvious, to those in the education community, by the outpouring of support for programs like this that they help reduce unwanted behavior in schools and increase positive behavior. Through the review of several different sources, the perceptions of School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Plans from teachers, students, and administration were analyzed. The research was also examined to determine if the number of discipline referrals supports the programs' claims, and they do decrease with positive behavior support.

The next topic that this literature review analyzed was school climate. There were three areas that were focused on in this study. The first was to comprehend the concept of school climate, identify the factors contributing to a positive or negative climate from the perceptions of students and teachers, and investigate the impact of a school-wide positive behavior plan on said climate. When dealing with people's perceptions, as undertaken in much of the research, numerous variables come into play. Assessing the research's validity was perceived as a potentially challenging task.

School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Plans have an effect on the school climate in a positive or negative direction. Through analysis of the literature the variables that determine what swings the pendulum in either direction were revealed. The question remaining was how one would determine what changes need made in what areas to create the right educational environment for that particular school.

Definition of School-Wide Positive Behavior

School-Wide Positive Behavior Support has been a research-based, highly effective approach to creating, teaching, and reinforcing students' social, emotional, and academic learning skills that have improved and sustained academic achievement and mental and emotional well-being (The Education Law Center of Pennsylvania & The Disability Rights Network of Pennsylvania [ELCP & DRN], 2008). This support system has been used in all the settings across the school building, including but not limited to the classroom, hallways, restrooms, and even transportation. Because this has been a multi-tier approach, there have been different methods and strategies for students depending on their needs. Students have been separated into different tiers based on their needs, with approximately 80% of the students falling in tier one, 15% residing in tier two, and 5% with the most needs falling in the intensive group of students. (ELCP & DRNP, 2008).

School-Wide Positive Behavior Plans differed from the traditional disciplinary model in several important ways. The first way was how, within the positive behavior model, the school spent a significant amount of time each school year defining and teaching positive social expectations. This differed from the traditional approach of just giving a code of conduct handbook and telling the students what not to do (ELCP & DRNP, 2008). Each school building acknowledged and rewarded positive behavior within the positive behavior plan, whereas in the traditional model, that behavior is expected and rarely acknowledged (ELCP & DRNP, 2008). The most significant difference comes from the continuum of intensive individualized interventions for students in the positive behavior model (Reddy et al., 2022). The traditional discipline

model had no system for individual interventions and all students must conform to one set of rules.

The traditional discipline model has expectations that were to be followed. There was no teaching of the desired behavior or how students could get in the good graces of their teachers. A school-wide positive behavior plan that was created and run correctly provides the expectations for students and staff. If students could not meet those expectations, interventions were designed to help them meet the goals that the leadership had established as desired behaviors (ELCP & DRNP, 2008).

Positive Reinforcement in the Classroom

Teachers have always had their own personal viewpoints and beliefs about positive reinforcement's place in the classroom and how it should be used. Some educators have viewed positive reinforcements as bribery to get students to do what they should have done daily. Other teachers have said that the use of punishment could produce anger, resentment, and aggression, which would further destroy the relationship between the teacher and the student (Dad et al., 2010). Contrastingly, when positive reinforcement has been used to reward a desirable behavior, the unwanted behavior is eventually extinguishing (Dad et al., 2010).

An example of how positive reinforcement has been used in the classroom was the online exercise created by the Centre for Psychology at Canada's Athabasca University. The online exercise offered positive reinforcement for self-instructional assessments. The professor praised the performance of the students who answered the questions correctly. The results from the online exercise showed an improved

performance on the rest of the quizzes from all the students in the class ("Positive

Reinforcement," 2007).

Though the results of this study provided some data to display that positive

reinforcement is good for students, it is only sometimes good for the student. In that

same breath, negative reinforcement is occasionally good. What the leaders in the

classroom need to determine is "what kind of behavior increase then these reinforces are

applied" ("Positive Reinforcement," 2007, p. 10). In simpler terms, is the reinforcement

correcting a negative behavior, or is it reinforcing a positive behavior for each student in

the classroom?

"Discipline is an important prerequisite not only for the functioning of the school

classroom, but also for the functioning of society as a whole" (Kropáč et al., 2023).

Discipline could be done by either providing positive reinforcement and praise to

students were doing what was expected and/or it could be done through punishment after

an unwanted behavior has happened. Either way, the intervention needed to match the

student(s) based on what worked best for them, not just what may or may not have

worked in the past.

Effects of School-Wide Positive Behavior Models on Discipline

When looking at the effects of discipline and the exclusions that typically follow

the traditional discipline model, these exclusions place students at risk for poor academic

engagement and performance, increasing school dropout rates and incarceration further

down the road (Gage et al., 2019). When looking at schools that have implemented the

School-Wide Positive Behavior model with fidelity, the statistics show that student

exclusions in the form of outside-school suspensions have decreased dramatically (Gage et al., 2019).

Along those same lines, the schools that were just implementing a school-wide positive behavior plan and not constraining to any guidelines coming from the state have not shown correlations between implementing a school-wide positive behavior plan and decreasing suspensions or exclusions from school (Ryoo et al., 2018). Ryoo et al's (2018) study took place in Minnesota and included an analysis of state assessments. The data collected was inconclusive as to any difference the school-wide positive plan made in academic achievement. The study concluded that the school-wide positive behavior plan that was carried out held more importance than the implementation alone (Ryoo et al., 2018). Consistency across the entire environment, including the classrooms and all the school areas, was of the utmost importance when implementing the plan (Ryoo et al., 2018).

Student Behavior Since the COVID-19 Pandemic

The changes in students' everyday life since the pandemic of 2020 have had an affected students' emotional well-being and their academic performance (Chairunnisak, 2022). The pandemic has had a real impact on student behavior which was one of the most influential aspects of the learning process (Chairunnisak, 2022). The impact that the pandemic had on the whole of education has sparked analysis in the areas of academics as well as behavioral. A study analyzing fifth graders' perspectives on the advantages and disadvantages to online learning reveled student felt they were able to come and go whenever they please, allowed to do work when they wanted to, or possibly skip assignments or zoom meetings if they did not want to attend (Minić et al., 2023).

These variables could be the catalyst to incite negative student behaviors in the future

(Minić et al., 2023).

Students face-to-face interactions with their teachers decreased dramatically

during the pandemic (Minić et al., 2023). In situations where the parents were home with

the students, daily habits were developed that were not conducive to learning in some

cases. Additionally, there were instances in which the teachers could not carry out

satisfactory educational practices. In certain cases, this resulted in disrespectful attitudes

from students. Teachers and students were also limited by, facilities and infrastructure

possibly not supporting the platforms they were trying to use (Chairunnisak, 2022).

These factors contributed, not in every case or equally to all students, to how students

behaved when school resumed and everything returned to "normal."

The one problem with the ability to research any real behavior issues that have

arose post COVID-19 has been that no baseline data was collected prior to the pandemic

because no one knew this would happen. A lack of baseline has created several

limitations on the studies that have been done in this area. A study on the effects of

quarantining students in Wuhan, China, compared post COVID-19 data to previous

research instead of collecting baseline data, which was able to serve its purpose (Liu et

al., 2021). Comparing the numbers of students with peer-to-peer issues, anxiety, prosocial

behavior, and hyperactivity showed the numbers were slightly elevated but were very

comparable when it came down to the "total differences" (Liu et al., 2021). A lot of the

documentation seemed to point to physical activity or lack thereof being the culprit for

affecting the children in several different ways.

Though the long-term effects could still not be adequately assessed, the perceptional data from the teacher's side seemed to favor an uptick in harmful or unwanted behavior in school (Liu et al., 2021). This was part of why positive behavior support plans have been implemented, and utilizing them school-wide only makes sense.

Examples of Multi-Tiered Behavior Support Plans

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support have been preventive approaches, intended to teach all students in a school system. They typically have leadership teams that take on the responsibility of ensuring that the systems meet the needs of all the students. These support plans have had effective communication and collaboration structures, meaning the team have used effective mechanisms to regularly seek input and feedback from key stakeholders and collaborate internally. Lastly, each successful example of a multi-tiered behavior support system had policies and procedures that the school committee establishes to support this school-wide model and ensure that all the students could be successful in the school system (Liu et al., 2021).

Though these different examples of multi-tiered behavior plan or school-wide positive behavior plans have had the same essential components, they all adapted and adhere to their school's students, staff, and community's individuality. In successful systems, there was typically a set of minimal rules that the schools had. These rules usually followed an acronym like SOAR or TEAM, where the students memorized what rules the letters represented and followed them accordingly. Schools usually used a token economy. This system used a reinforcement schedule that allowed students to learn something from being "caught" following the rules that were established. These economies were usually significant to the school by aligning them to a mascot. For

example, using terms like "Montour Money" or "Hornet Hi-Fives." Schools were free to

pick and choose what rules they wanted established and what rewards they wanted to use

for promoting behaviors, helping this system fit the school, students, and community

needs.

As long as the core concepts of the plans were the same, the system would

function effectively. The foundational parts of the system could be minimized; these

parts were the key to creating and sustaining the plan. In addition to the foundational

portions of the plans, some areas that helped evolve these school-wide plans into a more

effective and efficient system were tier scheduling. Tier scheduling allowed time for

evidence-based instruction and interventions. Scheduling time for academics and social

and emotional needs throughout the school year helped students greatly.

Common planning time for educators was beneficial when teachers were trying

to make data-based decisions. However, common planning time needed to be more

noticeable in developing these school-wide plans. Having foundations plus some of these

other resources helps your individualized school-wide plan flourish into something

practical and sustainable.

Those in opposition to positive behavior supports in a school system suggested

that using positive reinforcement is a form of bribery. Many debates included the

perception that students should have completed desired behavior on their own and school

officials should use consequences for negative behaviors. There have been many ways

students could earn recognition for things they should have been doing throughout a

school day. The focus would need to be on the tier two and tier three students, those who

commonly have had discipline issues with the current setup and have needed different reinforcements or interventions to change their behavior.

In some examples of a multi-tiered system, paraprofessionals have been used to help establish routines and help foster an environment in which the desired behaviors could happen regularly (Reddy et al., 2022). These paraprofessionals were examples of tier two and three interventions and behavioral supports where they coached children to reinforce positive behavior students falling in either the tier two or tier three category were in the top 20% of the entire student population that display frequent disruptive behaviors. These paraprofessionals were being used to help establish and reestablish the expectations for those students and created meaningful consequences when something happened in the school. The consequences that tier two and three students have already experienced have not been practical in previous interventions (Reddy et al., 2022).

The results of using paraprofessionals have been quite promising in research. Paraprofessionals have been used as a source for interventions like collecting observational data, modeling behavior, providing opportunities to practice different behavioral strategies, increasing performance, and providing behavioral feedback (Reddy et al., 2022). These positive findings indicated that antecedent practices were essential for paraprofessionals to proactively intervene and cultivate a supportive relationship with students with disruptive behaviors who were often accustomed to negative adult interactions (Reddy et al., 2022).

Looking at other examples of multi-tiered support structures in different elementary schools, they divided their students into different color themes to represent where they fell on the pyramid: green, yellow, or red. Green meant tier one, yellow

represents tier two, and red meant tier three, which represented five percent of students in

their school need the most behavioral interventions or the students that need the most

help to behave (Reddy et al., 2022). This structure allowed the school-wide positive

behavior team to easily classify these students and set them up with the behavioral

accommodations that the students needed to enhance desired behaviors. Typically, the

team would have a list of accommodations they have used in the past, like "check-ins and

check-outs," where a tier two student would meet with a staff member daily or weekly to

ensure that everything is on the right track. Once the data from this intervention had been

analyzed and assessed, the team could determine if it was working or if a different

frequency or intervention must be used.

     The examples of paraprofessional coaching and check-ins and outs were just two

of the tiers in a multi-tier intervention model. It showed how working with student's

strengths and pinpointing their skill deficiencies was a highly effective way to increase

positive behavior and academic achievement. The issue with this model was

straightforward, however. The number of needs would begin to outnumber the resources

the school had available for the students. Leadership would need to be creative and more

efficient in using personnel and resources to meet the student growing needs. As long as

the balance of interventions stayed in the shape of a pyramid, everything would remain

achievable in most cases. It was when the number of needs becomes so much that the

pyramid took on a different shape, and the needs became insurmountable that the school

or district would have a problem on their hands.

     Fidelity to the programming was the leading cause for the issues that led to the

needs of the students outweighing the resources that the district had available to them

(Sparks, 2016). When schools were just assuming that communication was happening it created an issue. Dedicated time needed to be scheduled for teachers to get together to come up with data driven decisions (Sparks, 2016). Roll over in leadership was something that was cited as an issue with the loss of fidelity in the programming (Sparks, 2016.) Districts that embrace the shift to using models like this as a whole seemed to have a better knowledge of how to utilize their resources better than when the schools were all conducting their own plans independently (Sparks, 2016).

Effects of School-wide Positive Behavior on Discipline Referrals

The purpose of a school-wide positive behavior plan has two significant elements: developing everyday routines and expectations throughout the school for all students. While both elements seemed like common sense, when organizing and managing an entire school building full of teachers and children, one quickly discovered that what made sense to one person or people often did not make sense to others. When one looked at how students were required to adapt and change to a new routine of classroom procedures and rules every year, too much time was spent practicing and developing these new routines. The first goal of a school-wide positive behavior plan was to cut back on the time students need to learn new expectations and academics.

When looking at studies on how children's'/students' routines were turned upside-down during or after the pandemic, it showed that there was a correlation between students being held to many different standards, both while at home and attending their schooling online (Minić et al., 2023). This was further impacted when students were splitting their time in hybrid model, using both face-to-face education and online learning at home. The research indicates that when students were without a routine or a set of

expectations that they were used to, it affected them in all different areas, including academics and behaviors (Segre et al., 2020).

When investigating research on the effect School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Plans had on discipline referrals, the research did not conclusively indicate that a lack of routine was the catalyst for increased discipline issues after the pandemic (Segre et al., 2020). To look at the data and see that there has been an increase in that area indicates that something definitely affected it, and maybe it had to do with all of the attributes that students have changed in their lives over the pandemic. However, their routines must be noticed as having been significantly manipulated.

The other foundational component that schools looked to embed in their everyday operations when developing and implementing a school-wide positive behavior plan involved the exact expectations for all students in the classroom, cafeteria, library, restroom, hallways, etc. If the students within a school had the same expectations from classroom to classroom, the environment became predictable from year to year. Therefore, following those same expectations allowed most students' behavior to also become predictable.

In a study by Lee in 2021, a team looked deeper into which students where affected the most by a school-wide positive behavior plan, based on ethnicity. The results, as revealed by the Poisson regression model, were significant. The study demonstrates that school-wide positive behavior support plans had a substantial impact on reducing school-level discipline outcomes for all students, as well as specific student subgroups (Lee, 2021). This study suggested that school-wide positive behavior plans

were a promising approach for creating more positive and inclusive school environments,

irrespective of students' gender, race/ethnicity, or disability status (Lee, 2021).

The implications of the research done by Lee (2021) reinforced the value of

school-wide positive behavior plans as a valuable tool for promoting positive behavior

and reducing discipline issues. However, it also underscored its potential to bridge gaps

in discipline among diverse student populations. The findings had practical significance

for educators, administrators, and policymakers seeking evidence-based strategies to

enhance school discipline and foster a more equitable learning environment.

Effects on Suspensions and Expulsions

Discipline has aimed to change unwanted behaviors or behaviors detrimental to

the environment (Gage et al., 2019). The hope for a school-wide positive behavior

approach was to get everyone on the same page so that students were not excluded from

the school environment due to choices that they have made that have been deemed to be

detrimental to the educational environment. On top of that, it has been tough to educate

students when they have been away from the building. Therefore, if schools could

develop systems that help educate students in the building, it should bode well for the

environment.

When examining studies about the impact that school-wide positive behavior

plans have had on the use of outside-school suspension, implementing a school-wide plan

with fidelity reduced suspensions compared to schools that did not implement such a plan

(Gage et al., 2019). The results showed that school-wide positive behavior plans could

have been an effective tool in reducing out-of-school suspensions (Gage et al., 2019).

Increasing the amount of time that students were in school increases the chances of

success in school due to their ability to participate face-to-face and reduced the

detrimental effects of suspensions like poor academic achievement, school dropout, and

contact with the juvenile justice system (Gage et al., 2019).

Gage et al.'s (2019) study did not find that the interventions that the schools had

in place had any significant effects on expulsion (Gage et al., 2019). While this might

seem like a limitation, it is essential to consider the overall goal of reducing the most

severe disciplinary actions. Even if school-wide positive behavior support plans did not

impact expulsions directly, its ability to reduce suspensions, even though considered to be

insignificant, could still be seen as a step in the right direction (Gage et al., 2019).

School-wide positive behavior support plans have helped reduce suspension rates

based on the Gage et al.'s (2019) research. The reduction in exclusions and suspensions

could have far-reaching positive implications for student's educational journeys and

future life prospects. Educators, policymakers, and researchers must continue exploring

and implementing evidence-based strategies like school-wide positive behavior plans to

create a more inclusive and supportive school environment for students to thrive.

Effects of School-Wide Positive Behavior Plans on Academic Achievement

Students' abilities to focus on their academics begins when their basic needs are

met daily. Those needs include feeling like they belong, feeling respected, and feeling

safe, as well as many other feelings that students might have, depending on their age.

Most students can have these basic needs met at home, through their family/guardians or

their support group, which may include several different people they might have in their

lives. The students that need affirmation in these basic needs categories are more than

likely the students that are falling in the tier two and tier three portions of the multi-tier

system. These students need accommodations or modifications to their behavioral

routines to help them focus on tasks that the educators have placed before them. This is

where the School-Wide Positive Behavior plan is designed to step in.

Even though positive behavior programs were designed to help the students

participate in class more, gave them clear and precise expectations that they can follow,

and aimed to be as consistent as possible, the data for general students did not show any

conclusiveness as to help with students' achievement on standardized testing (Nitz et al.,

2023). Researchers conclude that perhaps there are too many factors at play when dealing

with students like this and how these programs were affecting them academically. Two

school systems that produced desired outcomes had school administrators that were

involved in the process and teachers who were more committed to the approach from the

beginning (Nitz et al., 2023).

The students that are being assisted by these interventions were the "at risk"

students. At risk students were the students in the top 20% of the discipline referrals

submitted, meaning they are the students with the most frequent unwanted behavior.

Therefore, the question has to be asked: Is a school-wide program individualized enough

even when adaptations and modifications are being made for the tier two and tier three

students?

School-Wide Positive Behavior plans have never been proven detrimental to a

student's learning in schools. However, proving their validity based on available data has

been increasingly difficult due to the number of different variables (Nitz et al., 2023).

There were a multitude of different attributes that affect a student's achievement on top of the school-wide positive behavior plan.

There has been no school-wide plan that would accommodate every student's needs. Schools attempted to accommodate every student within tier one and adapted and accommodated to meet the needs the tier two and three students to the best of their ability. The key to any of these plans and their effectiveness seems to be the running theme of fidelity. Schools that develop a plan from another school's template were not making decisions based on analysis of their own students' skills or behavioral deficits (Nitz et al., 2023).

Teacher's Perspectives of School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan

Teachers were the employees with their ear to the ground. They had a significant role in the positive plan because they were the people administering the interventions that need to be implemented. How they perceive the plan and its "usefulness" reflected how they communicated the plan to the students (Upreti et al., 2010). Therefore, if they thought the plan was "rewarding students for things they should be doing anyway," the program's effectiveness would be compromised.

When looking at the teachers' perspectives on how effective a school-wide positive behavior plan was, studies were relatively inconclusive. This was due to the wide range of variables related to each study that affect students and staff alike. Something to take into account when looking at the perspectives of those implementing the school-wide plans, was that the small number of students that the interventions did benefit from outweighed those that it was not affecting (Upreti et al., 2010). It could mean that those plan was reinforcing positive behavior for have already established

improved behavior which was creating the appearance that the plan is ineffective. This has much to do with the teachers' perspectives on dealing with these daily behaviors.

Another portion of the teachers' perspective concerns how much control they felt they had over the system. This could also be defined as the type of leadership they were willing to portray within their classrooms. Teachers who saw success and have a positive perspective on the system were an active parts of the team attempting to solve behavioral issues with students through interventions. Teachers who have had a skewed perspective of the system were those who are looking for someone else to "take care of the issue" (Upreti et al., 2010).

Administrator's Perceptions of School-Wide Positive Behavior Plans

Leadership plays a vital role in any school-wide plan that a school is trying to implement (Scaletta & Hughes, 2020). Research found that principals of schools that implemented a School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan often had similar leadership styles,, but there were unique differences in their reporting on why they implemented their school-wide plan. All ten principals interviewed in a study performed in schools in the Midwest reported that they are implementing tier one and tier two interventions with fidelity (Scaletta & Hughes, 2020). Most of the principal that participated in the study reported that they were also providing tier-three support for students who also fell under that umbrella (Scaletta & Hughes, 2020).

Looking at the role of the administrator in the Scaletta and Hughes (2020) examples, it was abundantly clear that administrators had to be a leader for change when the data presents itself. A specific example of a principal taking this leadership role was

that when the administrator noticed a spike in behavior data that became consistent; it was more than just a wave of poor behavior. The principal then pulled together his positive behavior support team to discuss the data and determine what tier-one supports needed to be adjusted to meet the needs of the students better and correct the increase in behaviors they were seeing (Scaletta & Hughes, 2020).

Across the interviews conducted with the principals in Scaletta and Highes (2020) study, one commonality stuck out. That common thread was that "the work was never done." With a positive behavior system like this, the leadership needed to ensure that all of the right individuals were in the right places to meet the needs of the students. The more successful examples of school-wide positive behavior support have a proper team working behind them, not just one principal attempting to hold it all together. Furthermore, the research from the perspective of the administrators who have successfully implemented these systems indicated that there were also many challenges.

When school administrators reflected on the work of implanting a play, communication was the one component that continued to come up as a challenge (Scaletta & Hughes, 2020). This was especially true in the need for better communication with the stakeholders in the program regarding the purpose and design of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan (Scaletta & Hughes, 2020). Over time, it seemed that the administrators who were interviewed developed communication with parents and families that moved into the area in order to discuss the expectations and purpose of the plan.

Administrators' interviews indicated that they would have taken more of a team approach to this process from the beginning due to the buy-in aspect from the staff. The

process seemed to work much more efficiently when there was one person who was the designated leader other than the principal due to the principal's different duties (Scaletta & Hughes, 2020). Another example of challenges was the shift of leadership roles from principal to school staff member, which resulted in greater buy-in from the school staff. Having fidelity to the plan allowed the leadership team to critically analyze student and school-wide behavioral data and make focused and specific decisions based on that data.

School administrators have been crucial in successfully implementing a School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan, but they were not the most critical. Through analysis of the study conducted by Scaletta and Hughes (2022), the administrators recognized that the school-wide plan needed a team of the size of the school to be successful and promote real change.

School-Wide Positive Behavior Plans and Social-Emotional Learning

For positive behavior programming to have been effective, the leadership or administration must have actively planned, implemented, and reflected. This was obvious from looking at the research done on the perspective of administrators on school-wide positive behavior support; it also lends itself to other programming, everything from academic programming to behavioral. Social Emotional Learning is a type of programming that fits right in with school-wide positive behavior programming.

School-wide positive behavior and Social-Emotional Learning are two areas that have been on the educational scene for long enough to determine the impact that they are have had on schools (Albrecht & Brunner, 2019). Utilizing these two types of plans or programs together made sense due to their nature of them both. While a school-wide behavior plan was implemented throughout the school, a social-emotional learning

curriculum was typically taught classroom-by-classroom. Combining these models to

have the concepts of the social-emotional learning curriculum fuel the foundational

concepts of the school-wide positive behavior plan. Research indicated that when used

together, with fidelity, they could make a real difference in the number of office

discipline referrals as well as suspensions and expulsions (Albrecht & Brunner, 2019).

Analysis of office discipline referrals from the academic years of 2015-2018,

from Albrecht and Brunner's study indicated a decline in the number of total in-school

and out-of-school suspensions from 172 total incidents in the 2015-2016 school year to

142 in 2017-2018 (Albrecht & Brunner, 2019). The data collection included different

incident categories, including the area of "threat," which had 13 incidents in year one,

was not even in the top 5 in year three of implementing the social-emotional learning

program.

The teachers' feelings in the Albrecht and Bruner (2019) study were mixed when

investigating the school-wide positive behavior plan and the use of their social-emotional

learning program. Though "despite some less than positive staff perceptions on the

efficiency of PBIS and Second step, 74% report a positive school climate, and 60% report

strong/positive teacher morale in the building" (Albrecht & Brunner, 2019). Therefore,

the teachers had diminished the impact of office referrals over time, and they felt the

school climate and culture were positive and inviting.

Social-emotional learning went beyond the school environment; for this type of

learning to affect the students within the school, the community needed to be involved as

well. Programs like the Second Step program helped students with their social-emotional

learning, but to achieve the outcomes they are looking for, they also enlisted the

community and the parents to be a part of the process (Albrecht & Brunner, 2019).

Results from studies that have this structure, which included the parents and community

around them, have been very much in favor of school-wide positive behavior plans and

social-emotional learning working together and have had longer-lasting results (Albrecht

& Brunner, 2019).

Effects of School-Wide Positive Behavior Plans on the Community

Creating a positive environment or culture went beyond the walls of the school

and into the homes of the families in the community. While the actions occurred at the

school, the positive culture helped foster relationships between the parents and the

school, consisting of teachers and administration. The ability for the school and the

parents to be on the same team went a long way which was shown in the research on

communities' perception of the school and the number of discipline referrals moving in a

minor direction. Research indicated that teacher-family member teamwork toward a

common behavior goal, teachers' openness to family members' suggestions, and regular

two-way home-school communication were viewed as facilitators of school-family

partnerships (Strickland–Cohen et al., 2021).

Schools and school districts went to the extent of having their teachers trained on

individualized positive behavior. In one particular study by Strickland-Cohen et al.

(2021), the teachers were trained in a program called "partnering for behavior." They

learned strategies in a partnership-oriented model, which was a six-step process of shared

decision-making and goal-setting for teachers and family members of students who

struggled to meet school-wide and classroom behavioral expectations (Strickland–Cohen

et al., 2021). In this study, the teachers could attend additional training where they went

through guided practice and interacted with individuals in several scenarios. The

teachers then contacted a family member of a student who was having difficulty meeting

the classroom expectations for behavior. The training provided the teachers with a

resource to help them in creating a team approach to aid in helping the student behave in

a more positive manner.

The positive feedback took center stage when looking at the relationships made

during this process, especially during the parent-teacher meetings. Parents in Strickland-

Cohen et al. (2021) study described their interactions with the teacher as more productive

because they were actively setting goals for positive behavior rather than just hearing

about how awful their child was and how they were not following any school rules.

Another part of this model that helped with the relationship between the school and the

community was that the parents were invited into the school to meet face-to-face. The

parents appreciated this compared to receiving something over the phone or through

email. This personalized approach made them realize they were integral to the plan

instead of just hearing about what happened and dealing with it afterward (Strickland –

Cohen et al., 2021).

The results of the Strickland-Cohen et al. (2021) study also depended on the

fidelity to the programming being followed. Throughout the research, the teachers were

held to the standard of using the templates and materials provided to them through the

training. The only documents used to ensure fidelity were those created by the Partnering

for Positive Behavior program. This was vital in organizing the meetings with the

parents as it allowed for a template to be used to drive the goal-oriented conversation

(Strickland–Cohen et al., 2021). The staff only reported that having the parents undergo training to fill out the template would have been helpful.

Based on the research that has been reviewed, it is evident that a positive approach to discipline helps develop a rapport between the school and the community, even with the students having difficulty following the established expectations. Creating a community to help build up the students benefits everyone involved: the parents, teachers, and especially the students.

Definition of School Climate

The school climate was defined by the National School Climate Center (2022) as "the norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, and physically safe within the school setting." In a positive school climate, people were engaged and respected. Students' families and educators worked harder to develop and contribute to a shared school vision. Within this favorable school climate structure, all adults in the school environment modeled and nurtured attitudes that emphasized the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning, and each person contributed to the school's operations and the care of the physical environment based on best practices aligned by the National School Climate Center (2022).

School climate involves students' interactions with the staff and other students. When assessing school climate, it is essential to understand the whole picture. How students treat each other in a school is a critical component to examine. A factor of how students treat each other is bullying. School climate also includes the teachers' positive or negative attitudes toward administrators and gauging the administrators' felt experience of those attitudes. Assessing school climate also covers those basic needs that

the school-wide positive behavior plan addresses. Factors impacting the positive

behavior plan and school climate are safety concerns for students, teachers, and

administrators in the classrooms, bathrooms, hallways, and outside the school.

School climate can and will affect all aspects of the school, from the behaviors

that are repeated daily to the academic achievement of the students within the building.

To harbor a positive school climate, one must take the necessary steps to free the faculty

and students of outside distractions and allow them to focus on the critical elements of

the school day. Creating a school-wide positive behavior support plan could be crucial in

creating and harboring a positive school climate.

Creating a Positive School Climate

When creating an approach to help sway the school climate positively, it was

essential to emphasize evidence-based preventive interventions, classroom instruction

strategies, and formative assessments (Martinsone et al., 2023). Multi-tiered intervention

support systems like school-wide positive behavior support plans and social-emotional

learning were preventive approaches targeted at all students and aimed at developing a

whole-school culture that promotes social-emotional growth and behavioral adjustment

(Martinsone et al., 2023).

The teachers' well-being must be included in some of the supports put in place to

foster and sustain a positive school climate. Several comprehensive models have

promoted positive mental health at schools, emphasizing the importance of sustaining

teachers' well-being. Building relationships has made teachers more effective. Students

with better relationships with their teachers have increased engagement in their school

activities. Research collaborated these facts saying that teachers with higher social–

emotional competence build better relationships with students, improve classroom

interactions, and experience higher self-efficacy (Molinari & Grazia, 2021).

Classroom instruction strategies could also be a key to developing a positive or

negative school climate. Strategies promoting student well-being should also be

integrated into everyday teaching to promote and sustain a positive school climate. Using

formative assessments helps further a teacher's understanding of students' well-being in

the school environment not just how well they know the content.

The school climate could also reach beyond its walls and into the community. In

most communities, schools have been a cultural hub. After all, the policies and

procedures were created by a school board that individuals in the community operated be

being voted into their position by other community members. Schools and the

community must have established partnerships and collaborations to help foster an all-

encompassing positive climate (Molinari & Grazia, 2021; National School Climate

Center, 2022).

Several attributes have been needed to create and sustain a positive school

climate. It truly has taken everyone involved in all facets to keep the ship moving in the

right direction. The school-wide positive behavior models referred to the instructional

strategies used daily in each classroom and the school. Systematic change was needed to

create a desirable climate to come and work in each day. Developing and implementing a

school-wide positive behavior plan was a big part of that systemic change.

School-Wide Positive Behavior and School Climate

Teachers, paraprofessionals, and school leadership need to deal with a broad spectrum of problems. Students' and families' issues were very different than their issue throughout the educational landscape (Borgen et al., 2021). There were many variables that schools needed to work on to help educate the whole child, including issues with social-emotional learning, mental health, and socioeconomic status. The environment established within the school walls played a significant role in how well students learned and perform in the classroom, both academically and behaviorally. Being reactive with the disciplined approach creates a school climate that attempts to avoid getting caught. A proactive and preventative approach to dealing with issues that may arise creates an environment that allows students to know and understand the expectations beforehand and receive the support they need to succeed.

In research that has evaluated the relationship between school-wide positive behavior and the school climate, it is generally easier to see a direct correlation between the two once you drill down into some specific aspects of the school day. Looking at things like tardiness, unexcused absences, and the treatment of school, they all had a downward trend in middle schools that had implemented a school-wide positive behavior plan (Borgen et al., 2021). Oddly enough, the "treatment of school" in these studies shows a decrease in the first year of school-wide positive behavior plans in the first year. However, after that initial year, the data suggested that the plan was meaningful to the students, and their treatment of the school improved.

When looking at school, GPA is usually the standard measure of success. In the same study titled "Heterogeneity in short- and long-term impacts of school-wide positive

behavior support (SWPBS) on academic outcomes, behavioral outcomes, and criminal

activity," the middle school students collective GPA significantly jumped in the positive

direction (Borgen et al., 2021). The control group also made an increase of almost the

same variance. Therefore, the results are more inconclusive because the two schools still

need to implement a school-wide positive behavior plan, but this could have to do with

the curriculum or another attribute implemented at that time (Borgen et al., 2021).

When leadership looks at creating changes and adding interventions to their

school-wide positive behavior plan, it will affect the school climate in one way or

another. There are some key aspects to consider when creating new initiatives and

interventions. One aspect is the readiness of the school staff to implement these changes

(Ellis et al., 2022). If the changes and interventions are communicated properly then the

procedures are more likely to be followed with fidelity.

Implementing anything that will happen school-wide will affect how people act

and feel in that environment. It is essential that the staff feels supported in their venture

through a change. School-wide positive behavior plans are constantly adapting and

changing. Therefore, the teacher and staff must be adequately trained and helped with the

necessary resources for success (Martinsone et al., 2023). If the leadership can provide

the team members with this, the school-wide plan will succeed, and the school climate for

everyone involved will improve.

Student's Perception of School Climate

When operating a school, the purpose should be to enhance the students' lives

within the building to help them develop and grow into productive citizens in society

after moving on. To achieve that goal, the school needs to be somewhere where the

students feel respected and safe so that their "quality and character of school life"

(Strickland–Cohen et al., 2021) is such that their achievements can shine through

anything else that could have possibly been in their way.

Students in today's schools are experiencing "burnout" more than ever. There is

so much on each student's plate, from personal lives to grades, or getting into colleges

(Strickland-Cohen et al., 2021). Continuing to perform at a rate to achieve these goals

requires students to be engaged in their activities while in the school culture to a certain

degree. Students have been experiencing "burnout" due to this extensive engagement

with all their activities. Studies have shown that school climate can affect the amount of

"burnout" students experience when their sense of engagement is heightened to these

levels (Strickland-Cohen et al., 2021).

When looking at students who are perceived to have low achievement coupled

with high levels of "burnout," these students do not feel connected to the school

environment. The connection the students lack has to do with the school climate, their

relationships with their educators and classmates, and the work they are being asked to

perform. The student perceptions of these different areas are extremely low. They feel no

connection to those around them and even less to the work that they are performing.

Therefore, the student's perception of the quality of life and character within the school is

low, resulting in diminishing achievement and "burnout" (Strickland–Cohen et al., 2021).

Perception is a reality for any individual, and when people do not feel connected

to the people around them or the tasks they are being asked to complete, they will

perform poorly. It is frequently said that education is a people business. The output of the people from our system depends on the relationships that we are forming.

Teacher's Perspective of School-Wide Positive Behavior and the Effect on School Climate

A school climate's positive or negative connotation can significantly affect the students' experience within a school and their achievement (Wienen et al., 2018). It can also affect the teacher's experience daily while at the school (Wienen et al., 2018). Allowing teachers to be a part of the decision-making at the school from a leadership level, consistency with procedures, and continuity throughout the building are cited as ways that teachers feel valued more in the workplace (Wienen et al., 2018). While everyone agrees that it is of the utmost importance that the students come to school feeling safe, loved, and respected, if the educators do not think that way, it will be an uphill battle to create a positive school climate.

In a study performed in Turkey, many variables affected the teacher's perception of the school climate (Gunbayi, 2007). Some of these included gender, marital status, department that the teachers worked in, and amount of education one received (Gunbayi, 2007). Though this study was done in a separate country, it is still essential to look at the reason for the positive and negative connotations that people had towards the school climate and what caused it so that we can better understand and plan for the future in our schools in this country.

The gender construct comes from the fact that there are more males than females in the leadership responsibilities in the country of Turkey (Gunbayi, 2007). Therefore,

the females felt their opinions were not valued or heard, resulting in a poor school climate

score. Comparably speaking, elementary schools in the United States are typically

engorged with female employees and may need to be more cognizant of ensuring that

individuals of different genders feel valued in the workplace to keep everyone working

effectively and efficiently.

An interesting area in this study was the results in the sub-group of marital status.

The single individuals scored higher on the school climate results than those who

documented that they were married. Thoughts behind this include married teachers,

wearing several hats, and having stress applied in other aspects of their lives that may be

crossing over into their work environment. Whatever the purpose is, the teachers who

have fewer responsibilities outside of the workplace documented that they felt a better

quality of "work life" (Gunbayi, 2007).

Teachers with less education reported a more negative school climate at their

schools. This is thought to be because the teachers with more education are more

educated in theory and practice, making it easier for those teachers. In contrast, the

teachers with less education need to plan, prepare, and work harder than those with more

education (Gunbayi, 2007).

Looking at all the different variables that affected how teachers thought about

their school indicates that there is so much more than just programming within the school

that affects how teachers or students feel about their workplace and the people they work

around/with. This is likely why so much research in these areas comes back with a

determination of inconclusiveness.

Conclusion

Several apparent facts must be considered when researching the topics included in this literature review. Perceptional data is only sometimes the easiest thing to categorize because of the number of variables affecting how individuals perceive anything. Multiple hypotheses came up in one of the studies that the researcher said would have helped with the inconclusiveness of the findings. Therefore, when researching the data that needs to be collected to measure the validity of a school-wide positive behavior plan, that task is almost impossible due to the sheer number of different attributes that could affect the outcomes.

A lot of the same can be said when discussing the findings related to school climate, especially the research on how school-wide positive behavior plans affect school culture. How an individual sees the environment around them has to do with so many different things. In some research, the teacher's perspective even included their marital status. This is just one example of how variables that are out of the control of the programming or the school affect how individuals view the school. Is it safe, a good team environment, or where individuals want to work? The consensus is that there are many more factors to this than what happens within the four walls of the school.

Even with the consensus of the research being inconclusive, the part that keeps standing out to is the fact that there is not anything that you can find out there stating that a school-wide positive behavior plan necessarily hurts student achievement, creating an environment that increases negative behaviors, or aide to a hostile school climate. The utilization of school-wide positive behavior support plans is a research backed proven

program that should be used in schools, though the specific areas that I am looking for

information still come back inconclusive in most cases.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The research conducted throughout the literature review has provided the researcher with a plethora of information on School-Wide Positive Behavior Plans. The literature has provided perspectives from the students, administration, and teachers. In addition, there has been a good amount of research on the effectiveness of School-Wide Positive Behavior Plans and its effect on office referrals. Moving forward, the plan will be to utilize the background knowledge that has just been acquired to conduct the most valid research on Hasson Heights Elementary School's School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan from a qualitative and quantitative perspective.

Though the middle school in the Oil City Area School District had committed to utilizing a School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan, the other buildings, including Hasson Heights, still used a more traditional way of disciplining students. In addition, the middle school was using its own locally designed and maintained system. This is what prompted the leadership at Hasson Heights to move towards obtaining the Pennsylvania Department of Education formal accreditation with their School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan.

This chapter will describe the action research study and methodology. It will include important demographic information, a description of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan, and some of the issues in the school's transition to utilizing the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan. The action research project was a mixed-method study with quantitative and qualitative research components. A study utilizing a mixed-method

approach is very comprehensive. Research in this method of study can consist of

narratives, statistics, pictures, numbers, and observations. Ultimately, the results from

both measures, qualitative and quantitative, can validate one another, resulting in the

production of a stronger conclusion (Grand Canyon University, 2018).

The quantitative data was acquired from the average office referrals based on the

number of student versus student and student versus staff incidents over the course of the

three years prior to the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior

Plan. These numbers were then compared to the number of office referrals collected in

the 2023-2024 school year, using the same breakdown of student versus student and

students versus staff attributes.

In a qualitative research study, the researcher is able to create multiple

perspectives of the research phenomenon (Creswell, 2016). In doing so, the researcher

can compare and contrast these views as well as reflect on his/her own views or

experiences. This unique approach allows the researcher to become a part of the study

instead of being a passive observer (Creswell, 2016). Creswell and Poth cite in 2018,

"Qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of,

interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p.7).

The qualitative data collected was in the form of student surveys and interviews

conducted with members of the teaching and paraprofessional staff. The surveys will

provide the viewpoint of the students and how they view the school with respect to their

personal feelings regarding the school's climate. The interview answers will help the

researcher gain perspective on what the teachers think the effect of the School-Wide

Positive Behavior Program has been and if it has been positive or negative. Together,

these will provide the researcher with information on how the School-Wide Positive

Behavior Plan has influenced the school climate at Hasson Heights Elementary School.

Purpose

Public schools nationwide and the commonwealth have seen various upticks in

behavior referrals since the beginning of the pandemic. Hasson Heights set out to change

the procedures for assigning discipline and work with the Pennsylvania Department of

Education to obtain formal accreditation for the implementation of the School-Wide

Positive Behavior Support Plan. The purpose of assigning discipline is to change an

unwanted behavior. If the current practices the school was employing to process

discipline were not changing the unwanted behaviors, then this was a cause for a global

change in the approach.

Though the administration has seen the success of the School-Wide Positive

Behavior Plan, the perception of the principals often differed from that of the teachers.

This is mainly because the leadership has a vertical or more complete view of the whole

school, whereas the teacher's perceptions usually do not extend outside of the classroom.

In order to bring information to the staff that what we are doing is actually working we

need data from various points. We need data from the number of office referrals that are

coming in as well as data from the perception of how the programming is effecting the

students and staff within the building.

This data will enable the school to make informed decisions when it comes to the

programs future and how it needs to be adapted and molded to meet the needs of the

students and staff alike.

The action research study will determine how effective the School-Wide Positive Behavior Pan is by focusing on these research questions:

Question 1: How has the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan affected the number of discipline referrals, including referrals on the bus, incidents between students against students, and incidents between students and staff?

Question 2: How has the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan impacted the school climate from the perspective of the staff in grades kindergarten through four?

Question 3: How has the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan impacted the school climate from the perspective of the students in grades three and four?

The research questions were created to provide data regarding the plan's effect on the number of discipline referrals coming into the office. In addition, as the plan's effect on the overall environment, or climate, of the building.

Setting and Participants

The action research project occurred at Hasson Heights Elementary School. This school is a part of the Oil City Area School District. This school district's location is in Venango County in Oil City, Pennsylvania. During the time of this research, the school included grades kindergarten through four. There were four sections of classes in each grade level. The school employed a full-time guidance counselor; three reading specialists; one math specialist; and Art, STEM, Music, and Physical Education teachers. Fourteen paraprofessionals worked within the building. The building hosted an outside organization that conducted group therapy sessions for specific students within the building. The building worked collaboratively with the local intermediate unit to host

a multiple disability classroom that serviced eight students and employed five additional

staff members. The building operated a full-time learning support classroom, an

emotional support classroom, and two blended learning support programs that utilized a

co-teaching model and provided direct instruction for students.

At the time of this project, the student population at Hasson Heights Elementary

School totaled 399. This was based on the 2023 Student Information System that

reported public school enrollment to the Pennsylvania Information Management System.

The school's student enrollment was broken down into the following racial

ethnicities: 86.1% White, 5.5 % Black, 4.6% Multi-Racial, 3.6% Hispanic, and .3%

American/Alaskan Native. The school was considered 69.9% economically

disadvantaged, with 2.1% of the students in the foster care system and 2.8% considered

homeless. The special education percentage of the school was 17.8%, while 3% of that

was receiving gifted support.

Hasson Heights Elementary School had one principal and one assistant principal,

who have been in their respective positions for seven years and for this project. The

principal also oversaw the elementary special education programming for the entire

district and the technology department for the entire district.

 These evaluations were done through surveys from the students as well as

interviews with the staff members within the building. One teacher from each grade level

and one paraprofessional from each grade level were interviewed, as well as one reading

specialist and one special area teacher. Special area teachers were defined as the teachers

of subjects such as Art, Physical Education, STEM, and Music for the sake of this

research because those were the four "special" classes that were part of the school's

programming.

The majority of the participating teacher in the interviews had received

tenure. All the participating teachers have worked their entire careers in the same

building, Hasson Heights Elementary. The years of experience of the interviewed

teaching staff ranged from 14 years to 25 years.

Additional information about the staff included the fact that three of the teachers

are non-tenured. In contrast, sixteen regular education teachers have more than ten years

of experience. The regular education teachers with sixteen years of experience have

completed all years while at Hasson Heights Elementary School.

Research Plan

Before implementing the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan, the staff was

responsible for their own discipline structure and procedures within their classroom. The

teachers within the building were given the freedom to develop their classroom rules and

expectations based on their interpretation of the student handbook. So, each classroom

was essentially working in a silo as far as how they were dealing with behavior within

their own classroom. This created situations in which students were being sent to the

office for certain behaviors in one class but not in other classes.

The administrators saw this as a weakness due to the increase in behaviors that the

school was experiencing when the students came back after the pandemic. Therefore, the

principal and assistant principal set out to determine the best way to handle discipline in

hopes of creating a more cohesive unit and deterring the unwanted behaviors that students displayed during the instructional day.

The administrators developed a Positive Behavior Support Plan team with various individuals in the building. This team included the guidance counselor, several regular education teachers, and specials teachers. This participation structure was designed to give the team a global perspective of the building and the behaviors they were all experiencing. A behavioral specialist employed by the local intermediate unit was assigned to work with the Positive Behavior Support Plan team. This behavioral specialist led the team through modeling behavior expectations and served as a resource to lead the building to the goal of obtaining formal accreditation from the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

Over the duration of the 2023-2024 school year, the Positive Behavior Support team developed a system that the entire school could follow. The school adopted the acronym TEAM, which stood for the four rules for the school. Each letter of TEAM is used to describe the rules as follows: T stands for "treat yourself and others with respect," E stands for "encourage others," A stands for "act responsibly," and M represents "make good and safe choices." The group of administrators and teachers then created several different matrices and flow charts to align the acronym to each setting within the building. The settings within the building included the cafeteria, hallways, playground, classroom, and on the bus.

The flow chart developed by the team represented how the teacher should respond to unwarranted behavior, what behaviors were considered "minor," and which were considered "major." Minor behavior was something that the teacher was able to handle

within their own classroom with minimal consequences as a form of discipline. A

"Major" infraction was a form of discipline that used an official office discipline referral.

The referral meant that the principal would review the infraction and determine the

consequences, which were more severe than those of the minor infraction.

During the first year of implementing the School-Wide Positive Behavior

Program, the goals that the team and administration set were not accomplished. Hasson

Heights did not receive accreditation from the Pennsylvania Department of

Education. This was due to two major factors. First, the students needed to be made

aware of the system. Most students needed help defining the acronym TEAM when

asked what it stands for in relation to the expected behavior. Second, the teachers and

staff were inconsistent in implementing the procedures set forth in the developed flow

chart. Many staff members needed help to define what these procedures were in relation

to monitoring student behaviors. These factors contributed to the lack of success of the

School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan, which had little effect on creating a positive school

climate or decreasing the number of office referrals.

The team created an action plan during the next school year, 2022-2023. First the

team realized that the staff needed a better understanding and definition of the procedures

of the established flow chart. Therefore, the team focused on designing and

implementing professional development and training on the School-Wide Positive

Behavior planning process.

Several training sessions took place during the school's professional development

days. The teachers were able to ask questions and gain a better understanding of the

behavior matrix. The team also decided that training needed to happen for the students.

Over the course of the school year, lessons were taught to the students about the TEAM acronym. Examples of the preferred behaviors in each school setting were provided. This training defined the settings as the bathroom, cafeteria, hallways, classroom, bus, and recess.

To collect the behavioral data, the administration decided that the building needed to become uniform in how the data was collected and communicated home to the parents. The staff voted on the use of a computer application called Class Dojo, which is to be used building-wide. Through this application, the administrators could load the expectations on all the teachers' classes so that they were all uniform. The applications also communicate positive and negative behaviors to parents at home in real-time and features a communication tool for the parents and teachers to write back and forth to each other.

The data collected through Class Dojo has been used to help create behavior plans for students were referred to the Elementary Student Assistance Program. The team could clearly see antecedents for particular behaviors and develop plans of action to help those students according to the collected data. The percentage of positive behavior points was then used to reward students for following expectations at the end of each nine weeks. Rewarding the students for their positive behavior was an attempt to create the positive school climate the staff hoped for.

All of these changes were made in an attempt to create a positive school climate. A positive school climate is an environment where students feel safe and cared for so that they can do the required learning (National School Climate Center, 2022). Though all these changes were made to help create a more positive school climate, the administrators

had not developed a way to assess whether the desired results were

happening. Therefore, the researcher set out to determine the credibility of the program

through this action research project.

The researcher has been an employee of the Oil City Area School District as an

Elementary Principal for seven years. Prior to this position, he was an elementary

principal at a different school district for four years. In addition to the responsibilities

that occur with the principal job title, the researcher also oversees the elementary special

education department at the district level. The special education population in the school

includes an Emotional Support classroom that specializes in students with behavioral

issues and is utilized by the entire district. Due to the multiple lenses through which the

researcher must view the entire school district, it was evident that the behavior of

students was greatly affected by behavior programs. This, in turn, dramatically affected

the school climate.

The intention of adopting the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan was to

encourage the behaviors the school wanted to see more. Research found in the literature

review pointed out that when positive reinforcement is used to reward desirable behavior,

the unwanted behavior is eventually extinguished (Dad et al., 2010). The plan for a

portion of this action research project was to see if the application of positive

reinforcement worked in this instance. The other research portion was based on the

"effectiveness" of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan. Effectiveness was measured

by comparing the three previous years of disciplinary referrals before the start of the

program to the referrals of the 2023-2024 school year. Success in the program would be

a decrease in the number of referrals compared to the average of the three years prior. If

the number of referrals increased, the program would be viewed as ineffective as it has currently been implemented.

In addition to the discipline referrals that were coming into the office from behavior within the building, the research project also assessed the number of referrals the school received from incidents on transportation. Due to the nature of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan being all-encompassing, transportation falls under an area where the office has historically received a more significant number of discipline referrals. Therefore, comparing the number of bus referrals from before the plan was put into place versus the number of referrals after the plan has been established would indicate whether the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan has been effective in various settings.

Throughout the 2023-2024 school year, the researcher provided students with surveys that assessed the school climate. The overarching nature of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan directly affected the school's climate. The National School Climate Center (2022) defined the school climate as: "the norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, and physically safe within the school setting." The School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan encompassed all of these areas. Therefore, the assessment of school culture would show the effect that the plan has had on it.

Methods of Data Collection

The researcher used a mixed-method approach to answer the research questions. The mixed-methods approach was utilized to provide a broader spectrum to

answer the questions concerning the "effectiveness" of the School-Wide Positive

Behavior Plan. The qualitative data was collected from surveys and interviews from the

perspectives of the students and staff within the school. The quantitative data collected

was the number of office referrals that were collected by the principal's office from

interactions between students against other students, altercations between students and

staff, and discipline referrals from misconduct on transportation. The researcher believed

that using the mixed-methods approach provided them with the ability to triangulate data

to examine the "effectiveness" of the programming.

The effectiveness of the programming was determined by comparing the number

of office referrals taken from the average of the three years prior to implementing the

School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan and then analyzing it against the current office

referrals taken from the 2023-2024 school year. These incidents were for student-student

interactions and student-against-staff interactions, to be more specific. In addition to

evaluating the effectiveness of the program, the research evaluated the effect that the

program has had on the school climate.

The first step in this research project was the identification of a "problem." In this

instance, the problem was identified as the effectiveness of the School-Wide Positive

Behavior Plan. The researcher then set out to determine the appropriateness of the

method. Mixed-method was chosen due to the wide range of variables the School-Wide

Positive Behavior Plan encompasses.   The researcher determined that this method would

give a broader spectrum of results and aid in determining if the School-Wide Plan was

"effective" or not.

The rationale for the mixed-method study was developed during the third step in the process. The researcher had to determine why the data would be useful in the research study. The quantitative data was comprised of the office referrals taken from the previous three years (2020-2021, 2021-2022, and 2022-2023) and averaged. This average was then compared to the amount of office referrals collected over the 2023-2024 school year. Qualitative data was used to determine the effect that the program had on the school climate. Success would be achieved if the staff and students' perceptions of the program were more positive. All of this together was used to measure the program's effectiveness and aid in future decision-making.

At this point in the project, a data collection timeline was established. This diagram included a timeline that housed the research questions, data collected, and information about the materials used and participants.

Research question one asked: How has the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan affected the number of discipline referrals, including referrals on the bus, incidents between students against other students, and incidents between students and staff? The researcher collected discipline referral data from the student information system for the school district, including the incidents on transportation, between students and between students and staff members (Table 1). The first portion of the collected data was the average number of incidents per year over the three years before the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan was implemented. After the initial data set was collected, the researcher collected the number of incidents over the current school year, which included the implemented the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan. The data was then compared to calculate the effectiveness of the program in reference to how the number of

referrals compared after the implementation of the program to the three years before the

School-Wide Positive Behavior Program was put in place.

Table 1

Data Collection Plan: Research Question 1

RESEARCH QUESTION(S)	TYPES OF DATA TO COLLECT (i.e. qualitative, quantitative)	DATA SOURCES (detailed explanation of the types of data you will collect)	TIMELINE FOR COLLECTING DATA
1. How has the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan affected the number of discipline referrals including referrals on the bus, incidents between students against students, and incidents between students and staff?	Quantitative	Discipline office referrals from the previous three years involving student vs. student interactions as well as student verses staff interactions, will be averaged and compared to this school year's totals. The Bus discipline referrals from the previous three years will be collected and compared to the bus referrals over the current school year.	The initial collection and averaging will be done in February The data from this school year will be collected and compared in April.

Research question two asked: How has the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan

impacted the school climate from the perspective of the staff in grades kindergarten

through four? The researcher used a semi-structured interview they developed to collect

the qualitative data (Table 2). The interviewees included one grade level teacher from

each grade, one reading specialist, one special area teacher, and one paraprofessional

assigned to work with each grade level. The staff was asked to volunteer to participate

during a faculty meeting in February 2024. The staff was welcome to sign up to

participate using a Google form that was hyperlinked to the faculty meeting agenda.

After acquiring the names of the staff members who volunteered, it was found

that several grades were not represented. The researcher then sent an email to the grade

levels that were absent from the list of participants. After all the grades and areas were

represented, the researcher scheduled times to meet with the individuals and conducted

the interviews. The interviews were scheduled during the teachers' prep period or after

school. The interviews with the paraprofessionals were scheduled for after their shift was

over due to their breaks only being fifteen minutes long. The researcher utilized a

structured interview, defined as when "the researcher begins with an interview guide

consisting of a set of predetermined questions" (Mertler, 2022). This method of

interviewing was chosen to ensure the consistency of the interviews. However, follow-up

questions to the interview questions did come up, and the researcher could utilize some of

that data, creating a more semi structured interview format.

When conducting the interviews, the researcher recorded the interviewee's

answers as they were answering them by writing the interviewees answers by

hand. Though the interviews started out very structured, the researcher did develop

several follow-up questions for several staff members based on their answers. The

researcher attempted to use "bracketing" when conducting these interviews. Bracketing

is defined as a "scientific process in which a researcher suspends or holds in abeyance his

or her presuppositions, biases, assumptions, theories, or previous experiences to see and

describe the phenomenon" (Gearing, 2004). The researcher then used the collected data

to determine the staff's overall perception of the programming and its effect on the school

climate.

During the analysis of the interview results the researcher coded the results to

more accurately group the perceptual information. The codes ranged from positive to

negative in areas of school climate, student discipline, and staff perception.   This

allowed the researcher to analyze and categorize the staff's answers in order to test how

effect the programming has been in the perception of the staff and the staff's feelings as

to how the programming has been effecting the students in either a positive or negative

manner.

Table 2

Data Collection Plan: Research Question 2

RESEARCH QUESTION(S)	TYPES OF DATA TO COLLECT (i.e. qualitative, quantitative)	DATA SOURCES (detailed explanation of the types of data you will collect)	TIMELINE FOR COLLECTING DATA
2. How has the school-wide positive behavior plan impacted the school climate from the perspective of the staff in grades kindergarten through four?	Qualitative	Interview with one staff member from each grade from kindergarten through fourth grade, teachers from the specials areas, reading specialists, and one paraprofessional at the end of the school year	Interviews will be conducted at the beginning of March 2024

Research question three asked: How has the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan

impacted the school climate from the perspective of the students in grades three and

four? Table 3 describes the student population that would be surveyed, the actual survey

used and its source, and the timeline of when the surveys would be administered. The

researcher administered the surveys during the students' time with their guidance

counselor when they were scheduled to receive their monthly guidance lesson.

To receive permission to have each individual student partake in the survey, the

researcher sent home a permission slip for the parents to sign and send back to the school

(Appendix D). The researcher anticipated that the majority of students would return with

their permission slips signed so that they could participate at a rate of around 50%. Once

the adequate number of students returned the proper permission to participate in the

survey, it was administered in the guidance counselor's classroom during the class's

guidance lesson. After collecting all the permission slips, there were 88 students that

participated in the survey during their guidance lesson.

The surveys were conducted on paper rather than on the computer because the

students had more experience using paper and pencil than partaking in computer

assessments. Once the students had completed the surveys, they were collected by the

researcher and tabulated by hand. All the questions in the survey were multiple choice,

making it easy for the researcher to tabulate by hand. The researcher was able to apply

percentages of the students' perceptions and apply it to the results of the qualitative

research.

The term survey referred to the administration of a set of questions to a sample of

people. Regarding the surveys, the researcher utilized a four-point Likert scale. The

students' choices were always, often, sometimes, and never for a portion of the

survey. The other portion of the survey had the choices "Strongly Disagree, Disagree,

Agree, Strongly Agree." Questions formed this way are referred to as attitudinal

questions (Mertler, 2022). Utilizing a survey was determined to be the most efficient

way to collect data from the sample group of students.

Table 3

Data Collection Plan: Research Question 3

RESEARCH QUESTION(S)	TYPES OF DATA TO COLLECT (i.e. qualitative, quantitative)	DATA SOURCES (detailed explanation of the types of data you will collect)	TIMELINE FOR COLLECTING DATA
3. How has the School-Wide positive behavior plan impacted the school climate from the perspective of the students in grades three and four?	Qualitative	Three surveys will be completed with the students throughout the 23-24 school year. The first will be in September, the second in January, and the third in May. Data will determine the school climate and the effect that the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan has had on it. The survey is titled "Student Grades Elementary, School Climate Survey," from paschoolclimate.pa.gov There are 146 third and fourth-grade students I anticipate having roughly 50% participate in the survey due to not receiving proper permission back from parent to partake in the survey.	Three surveys will be completed with the students throughout the 23-24 school year. The first will be in September, the second in January, and the third in May. Data will determine the school climate and the effect that the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan has had on it.

This study has no financial implications for the Oil City Area School District. The

School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan utilizes existing programs like the school's Student

Information System to aid in decision-making and planning for the future. The program

does receive donations from the Home and School Organization to supply the students

with prizes for their positive behavior.

Validity

The researcher utilized several different strategies to ensure the validity in the

study. This action research project utilized both qualitative and quantitative data, and its

validity was improved due to the spectrum of perceptual data and the hard numbers

collected in the form of office discipline referrals.   Due to the School-Wide Behavioral

Plan being all-encompassing of the school and the students, a more holistic approach to

data collection was utilized. The researcher determined that mixed-methods was the best

way to do that.

Regarding the quantitative data that was collected, the researcher wanted to

ensure that the number of office referrals compared before and after the implementation

of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan was not just a one-year sample size.

Therefore, when collecting data from before the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan, the

average of the previous three years was collected instead of just one year to increase

validity and allow for data triangulation.

Summary

The action research study used a mixed-method approach to describe the effect

that the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan had on the number of discipline referrals

submitted to the office and the effect that the program had on the overall school climate.

The researcher described the problem as a lack in assessing the effectiveness of the

program, then researched literature, developed and implemented a timeline, chose

students and staff to participate, and analyzed the data.

The action research resulted in an understanding of the effectiveness of the

School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan. These results will be shared with the faculty to help

aid decision-making in the future and help the program grow and develop positively.

CHAPTER IV

Data Analysis and Findings

The use of school-wide positive behavior plans was something that has gained a lot of ground in the public education realm over the past ten years. The structure of these plans ranged all over the spectrum to fit the needs of the individual school, community, staff, and students. Even though these systems were put into place, there was little data analyzing how effective they were in reducing the frequency of negative behavior, or the effect that school-wide positive behavior plans had on the school climate. Through this mixed-methods study the researcher examined both the effect that the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan had on the frequency of office discipline referrals, as compared to the average of the three years prior to the programs implementation, and the effect that the program had on the school climate from the perspective of both the students and the staff. The data collection consisted of surveys of the students, interviews of the staff, and information collected from the Student Information System within Oil City Area School district regarding the number of discipline referrals from both before and after the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan.

The information in this chapter focused on the analysis and findings of the data collected from three different evaluation tools. These tools aligned to the research questions identified earlier in this document. The findings included quantitative data from the Student Information System regarding the number of office discipline referrals related to negative student against student interactions, student negative interactions with staff, and referrals from bus incidents. The qualitative portion of the research was regarding the effect that the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan had on the perceptions

of both the students and the staff and was administered in the form of a survey by the students and an interview of the staff.

Data Collection

The first research question in this study was, "How has the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan affected the number of discipline referrals, including referrals on the bus, incidents between students against other students, and incidents between students and staff?" To address this question the researcher obtained data from the Oil City Area School District's Student Information System regarding the office discipline referrals for those three incident types. The timeframe that the data was collected from included the 2023-2024 school year and the average of the three years prior to that year. This allowed the researcher to compare the data from before the plan was implemented to after the implementation.

The second research question was addressed by obtaining perceptual data from the staff regarding the effect that the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan had on the school climate of the building. This information was collected through interview questions that were created by the researcher. The interview consisted of eight questions ranging from the staff's beliefs about the effect the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan had on the school, to their beliefs about the students' perspectives on the plan. Staff was also asked about some specific parts of the plan like the token economy and the effect that it had on the overall behavior of the school and the school's climate. The staff from Hasson Heights Elementary School included one teacher per grade level, from Kindergarten to fourth grade, one reading specialist, one paraprofessional from the primary grades, one paraprofessional from the intermediate grades, and one specials area

teachers from the department that included STEM, Art, Music, and Physical Education.

Three different categories were given to the answers to the interview questions, either the

answers were deemed to represent a positive impact on school climate, a negative impact

on school climate, or they were neutral, which meant that they did not affect the school

climate at Hasson Heights.

The third research question, regarding school climate from the student's

perspective included data that was collected from a survey conducted by the researcher

with the third and fourth grade students from Hasson Heights. The survey was from the

website paschoolclimate.pa.gov and included information about the students'

perspectives about themselves, the school, and their teachers. The students' identities

were kept confidential when scoring the results of the survey and were recorded as a

whole group rather than individual results.

Data Analysis and Results Related to Research Questions

Research Question 1

To address the first research question, "How has the implementation of the

School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan affected the number of discipline referrals including

referrals on the bus, incidents between students against students, and incidents between

students and staff," the researcher collected data from the district's student information

system. The data compared the average of the three years prior to the implementation of

the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan of incidents involving students against other

students, students and staff members, and number of overall bus incidents.

Figure 1 depicts an increase in interactions between students against other students from the average of 68 to 72 during the 2023-24 school year. The altercations from students and staff went down from 34 during the three-year average to 26 during the 2023-24 school year. The number of bus incidents went from 152 over the three-year average to 134 during the 2023-24 school year.

Figure 1

Student Incidents
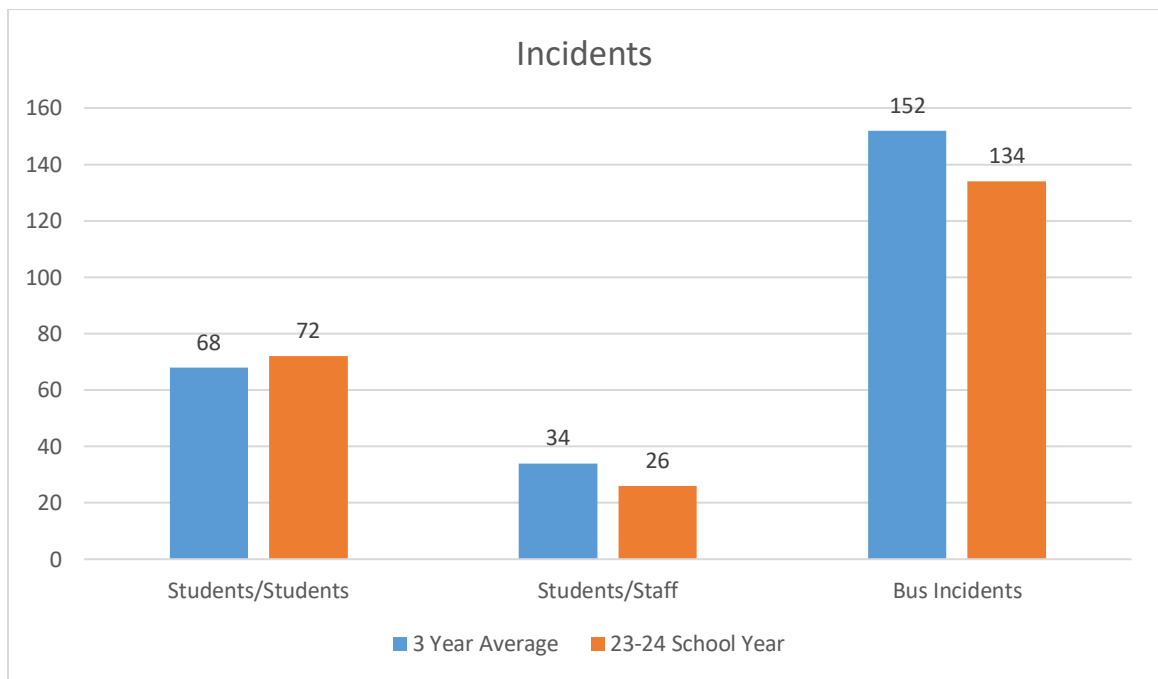
Research Question 2

To successfully answer the second research question, "How has the school-wide positive behavior plan impacted the school climate from the perspective of the staff in grades kindergarten through four," the researcher conducted interviews with the staff and categorized their answers into three categories of responses: those that felt that the

School-Wide Positive Behavior plan had a positive effect on the school climate, answers

that felt that there was a negative impact that the plan had on the school climate, and

lastly, answers that were considered neutral, which meant that the staff felt that there was

no impact on the school climate in either a positive or negative direction.

The first questions asked, "How has the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan

affected the discipline within the school?" Seven of the nine teachers that interviewed

answered in a way that showed the School-Wide Plan had a positive impact on the school

climate. One staff member answered that they felt "it didn't have much of an impact,"

this was categorized as a neutral answer. One staff member felt that it "made the students

feel entitled to receiving a reward for behavior that should be expected;" this answer was

categorized as negative.

Interview question number two had to do with the School-Wide Positive Behavior

Plans impact on discipline in the classroom. All nine staff members felt that the impact

was positive. One staff member highlighted the use of the tool Class Dojo and stated,

"this tool allows the students to take ownership of their behavior and it allows the

students to be more cognizant of their actions and learning." Another staff member

indicated that they liked the use of Class Dojo because, "it allows the teachers to all use

the same expectations from year to year, and it causes the students to have less time

adjusting to a new set of rules." A teacher stated that they like the communication

portion of Class Dojo stating, "being able to communicate positive and negative

behaviors with parents in real time has been a game changer for getting everyone on the

same page."

The third question asked, "How has the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan affected the discipline of the students in the common areas?" Seven out of the nine staff members felt that the response to the plan affected the school climate in a positive fashion. One of the staff members that felt that it had a negative impact stated, "students need to be intrinsically motivated to behave properly, students are just performing actions and asking for a reward is not the result that I believe the program is looking for." One staff member had a response that was categorized as neutral. A staff member that felt the impact was positive stated, "The students are more aware of the expectations of the school. Posters decorate the hallways and other common area reminders. Students are more conscientious of their actions and how they affect others. Most of the time, most of the students meet those expectations on a regular basis." Another staff member stated, "expectation in the common areas are sometimes over-looked by some of the staff and that can't be done anymore because everyone knows what the expectations are now in the hallways, bathrooms, cafeteria, etc."

The fourth question in the interview revolved around the staff's opinions of the students' perceptions of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan. All nine staff members that participated in the interview stated that they feel the students have a positive perception of the plan; therefore, the result is a positive impact on the school climate. The interviewees highlighted things like the end of the grading period rewards that the students work for and the TEAM days that the students participate in as having a positive impact on the school climate as a whole. "The TEAMs really give the students a heightened sense of belonging beyond just being a student in the school, they work together as a team in a bunch of different competitions and get to know more students

from different grades while they do that, it has made a big different in the comradery of the school in that sense, in my opinion."

The fifth question asked about the staff members' perceptions of the token economy that goes along with the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan. The results were seven staff members feeling that it had a positive impact on the school climate, one staff member felt that it did not have an impact, and one staff member felt that it had a negative impact on the school climate. The individual that felt that it had a negative impact stated, "If the students are only doing an action in order to receive something for it, it nullifies what the program is trying to do, the staff hands the tickets out too often for them to have the impact that the program is looking for." One staff member that spoke favorably of the token economy stated, "I treat the token economy as getting paid. When speaking with my students, I explain that being a student is their job. They earn knowledge and skills that help them to become successful people. The token economy models what will happen when they are gown and earning an income."

Question six asked "what is the student's perception of the token economy? Is this something that the student wants to work for through positive behavior?" Again, seven members of the staff felt that this had a positive impact on the school climate, one felt that it had no impact, and one thought that the impact was negative on the school climate as a whole. Of the staff that thought the impact was positive one stated, "The students love to work for prizes and rewards. They want to know their positive behavior percentages throughout the school year. They look forward to earning enough points to purchase rewards." One of the other staff members that thought positively of the token economy stated, "As long as the staff is following through on the token economy it has a

lot of value to the students, at times I feel that people just give things away which hurts the value of the tickets, but it is done right here 99% of the time so it is working well." The staff member that felt there was no impact stated, "It is always the same students that seem to be on the negative side of things no matter what plan we put in place. It comes down to the students wanting to do it, and if they do not, there isn't much that the staff can do to help that."

The seventh question in interview of the staff asked if they thought "the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan has been a positive addition to the school?" It also asked the interviewee to expand on this and give some examples. Eight of the staff members answered in a way that would be considered a positive endorsement of the plan. One interviewee focused on the TEAM system that the school has adopted and the impact that it has had on the students. Stating, "the program has allowed for relationships to form through different grade levels for both students with other students, as well as staff to students that they have not had the opportunity to teach in class." One staff member again cited the fact that "no matter what program it seems like we implement you still have the same students doing the same things on a daily basis." This answer was categorized as neither improving the school climate nor having a negative impact but a neutral impact on the school climate of Hasson Heights.

Question eight was about the parents' perceptions of the program, it asked, "Do you feel that the parents are on board with the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan, and how do you think we could improve on parent involvement?" All nine interviewees stated that they felt that the plan improved the school climate, mainly through communication. "I think parents appreciate the plan, communication of what is

happening in real time helps everyone get on the same page with student behavior. I

think that more education on how the plan is being done within the school day would be

beneficial for the parent to buy-in more. Perhaps parents could be placed on one of the

teams also to help get them more involved."

Research Question 3

To address the third research question, "How has the School-Wide Positive

Behavior Plan impacted the school climate from the perspective of the students in grades

three and four?", qualitative data was collected through the use of a survey called

"Student Grades Elementary: School Climate," from the website paschoolclimate.pa.gov.

The survey was split into four different sections, "About Your School," "About your

Teachers," "About Students at your School," and "About You." The survey consisted of

43 questions within those categories and was completed on paper during the students'

guidance lesson. Eighty of our third and fourth grade students completed the survey

during this time which came out to 53% of the student eligible to complete the document.

School Climate Survey (Demographics)

The survey was conducted in April of 2024 with 80 third and fourth grade

students from Hasson Heights Elementary School in Oil City Area School District.

Permission documents were sent home to all 150 third and fourth grade students but only

80 came back to the researcher. Therefore, 80 surveys were what was conducted in April

during the class's guidance lessons. Figure 1 and Figure 2 display the only demographic

data that was collected during this survey. That being the grade of the students and if

they were Male or Female. The fourth graders accounted for 46.3% of the students that

took the survey while 53.8% of the students were third graders. Gender demographics

were: 53.8% of the students stated that they were male and 46.3% of the students stated

they were female.

The first section of questions about school climate revolved around how the

students felt about their school. An overwhelming majority of students stated that they

felt safe in and around the school. The results of how bored the students were in the

school were mixed. Students both agreed and strongly agreed that the teachers were fair

and there to help the students. While the majority of students either strongly disagreed or

disagreed that they would want to attend a different school.

Figure 2 depicts that of the 80 students that completed the study, 76 believed that

the teachers were fair to all students, 78 students agreed or strongly agreed that the

teachers were willing to help them, 72 students disagreed and strongly disagreed that they

wished they went to a different school, 46 students strongly disagreed or disagreed that

they were bored at school, 73 students stated that they felt safe at school, 75 agreed or

strongly agreed that they felt safe in the hallways and bathrooms, and 71 students stated

that they felt safe in their classrooms.

Figure 2

Perceptions About School
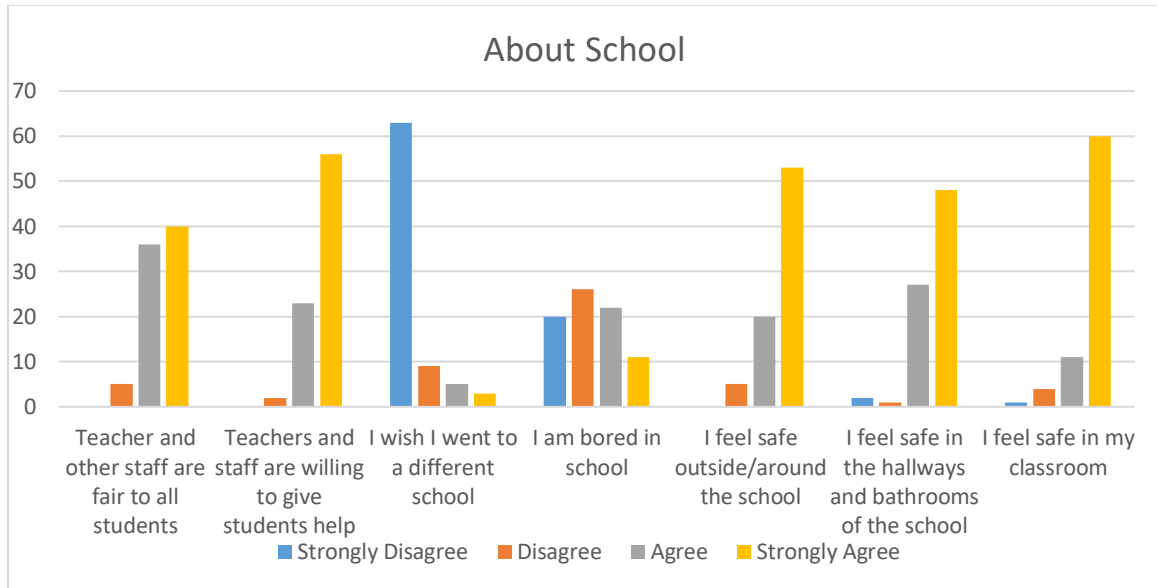
The second portion of the survey was just three questions about the other students

at school. The majority felt that most students were treated with respect. Seventy

percent of students disagreed that students were bullied in the school, and 68% of

students stated that they disagreed that students were teased in school.

In Figure 3, it shows that 18 students disagreed or strongly disagreed with fact

that students treat each other with respect, while 62 students agreed or strongly agreed

with that statement. Forty students strongly disagreed with the fact that students at their

school were bullied, while 16 disagreed, 17 agreed, and seven strongly agreed that

students were bullied at Hasson Heights. Twenty-nine students strongly disagreed that

students got picked on, while 25 disagreed, 20 agreed, and four strongly agreed that

students got picked on, made fun of, and called names at their school.

Figure 3

*Perceptions About Other Students at School*
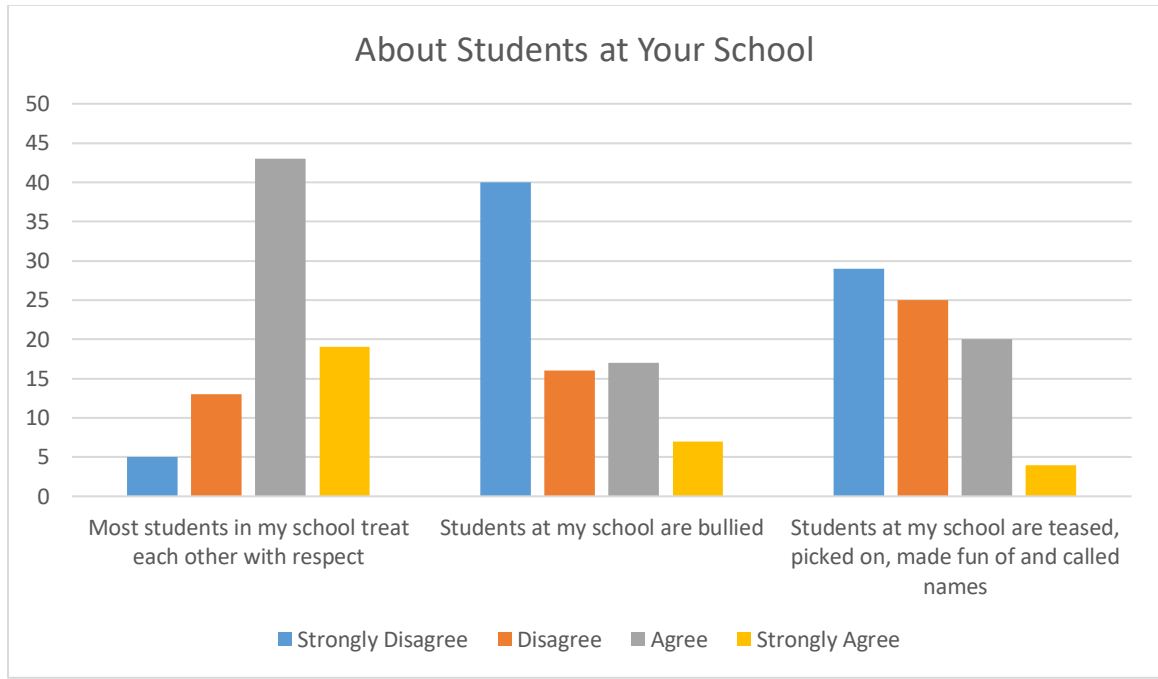
The third portion of questions in the survey asked the students about their feelings toward their teachers. The questions ranged from asking about if the students feel that their teacher cares about them, if their teachers treat everyone fairly, to if their teachers help them perform better at school? The data collected was helpful in determining how their relationships with their teachers affect the school climate.

Figure 4 displays that 18 students agreed that their teachers really cared about them, 61 students strongly agreed with that statement. Forty-two students strongly disagreed that their teacher treated some students better than others, 22 disagreed with that statement, 11 agreed with it, and five strongly agreed with that statement. Forty students strongly agreed that their homework helped them, 27 agreed with it, five disagreed, and seven strongly disagreed. Forty-one students strongly agreed that their

teachers noticed if they were having trouble learning something, 34 agreed, four

disagreed, and zero strongly disagreed. Sixty-one students strongly agreed with the

statement that teachers helped them do better on their work, 18 agreed, one disagreed,

and zero strongly disagreed. Twenty-seven students strongly agreed that their work was

interesting, 43 agreed, eight disagreed, and two strongly disagreed.

Figure 4

Perceptions About Teachers
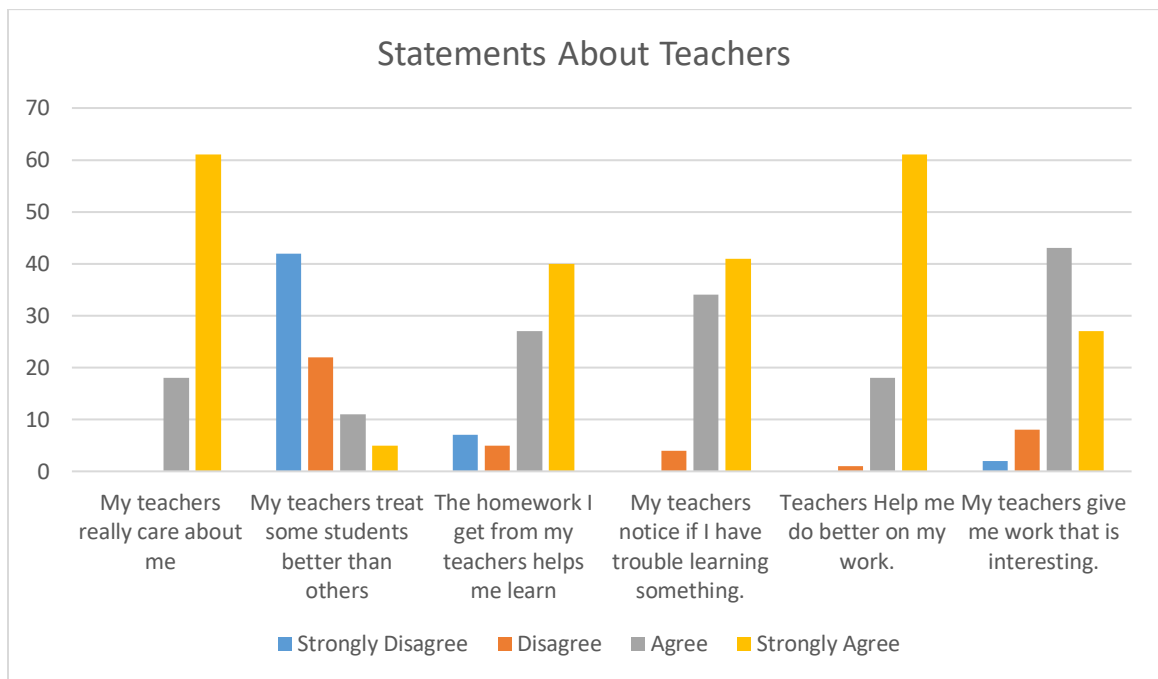
The following portion of the survey was split into three parts for the purposes of

this discussion due to the number of questions and ease of depicting what was displayed

in the graphs. In this third part of the survey students were asked questions about

themselves, their decision making, and how they treat others.

Figure 5 displays that 43 students said that it was very much like them when asked if they feel responsible for how they act, 31 said it was somewhat like them, three said not much like them, and three said it was not at all like them. Fifty-seven students said that it was very much like them when asked if they think about how others feel, 19 said that was somewhat like them, four said not much, and zero stated that was not like them at all. Fifty-seven students said that controlling their own anger sounded very much like them, 20 said somewhat like them, two said not much like them, and zero said not like them at all. Twenty-nine students said that solving conflicts with others sounded very much like then, 34 said that was somewhat like them, nine said that it was not like them, and eight said that was not like them at all. Sixty-nine students said that caring how other students felt was very much like them, and 11 said that that was somewhat like them. Forty-seven students said that thinking before they act was very much like then, 25 said somewhat like them, four said not much like the, and four said that did not sound like them at all. Forty-eight students said that getting along well with others sounded very much like them, 25 said somewhat like them, and seven said that was not much like them. Fifty-five students said that they make good choices, 20 said that sounded somewhat like them, three said that was not much like them, and one said that was not like them at all. Fifty-three students said that respecting what others think sounded very much like them, 21 said somewhat like then, four said not much like them, and one said not like them at all.

Figure 5

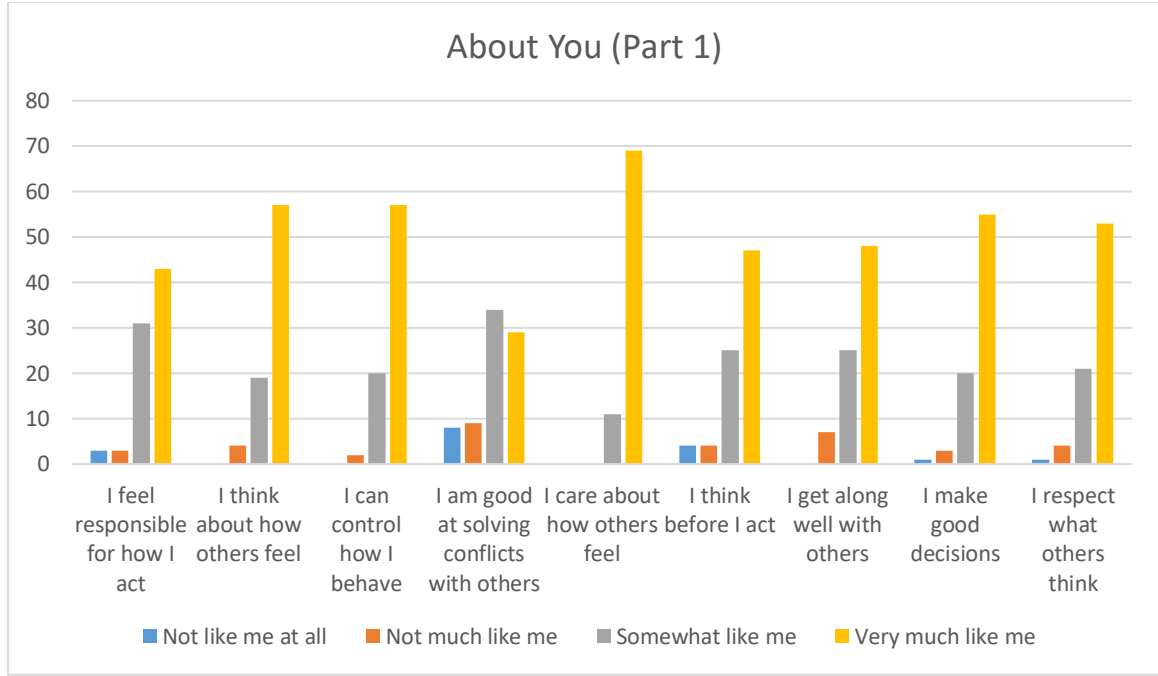*Perceptions About Yourself (Part 1)*

Figure 6 below depicts the following information. Forty-two students felt that the

statement "I can control my anger" was very much like them, 26 believed that it was

somewhat like them, eight felt that it was not much like them, and five stated that it was

not like them at all. Sixty-five students stated that being kind to others was very much

like them, 13 said somewhat like them, and one said that it was not much like them.

Forty-seven students said that thinking about consequences was very much like them, 23

said that it was somewhat like them, four said not much like them, and four said not like

them at all. Fifty-five students said that understanding how others think and feel was

very much like them, 21 said that was somewhat like them, and four said that it was not

like them at all. Forty students said that calming themselves down sounded very much

like them, 28 said that was somewhat like them, seven said that it was not much like

them, and five said that was not like them at all. Sixty-one students said that helping

others was very much like them, 14 said that was somewhat like them, and four said that

was not much like them.

Figure 6

Perceptions About Yourself (Part 2)
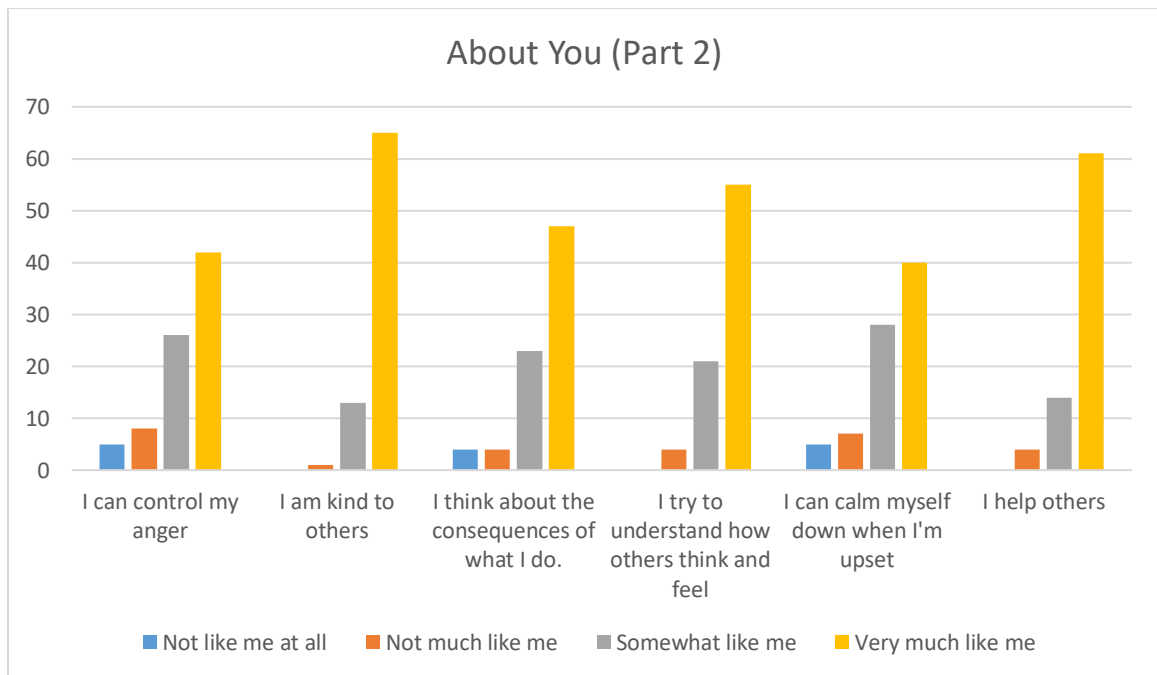
Figure 7 indicates that 28 students said that they always liked school, 26 said

often, 23 said sometimes, and three said that they never liked school. Forty-three

students said that they felt like they do well in school, 21 said they often felt that way, 14

said that they sometimes felt like that, and two said never. Seventy-seven students said

that they felt that their school wanted them to do well, two said that happened often, and

one said sometimes. Sixty-nine students said that their school had clear rules for

behavior, five said often, and five said sometimes. Sixty-six students said that their

teacher treated them with respect, 14 said that happened often, and zero students stated

that their teacher never treated them with respect. Forty-one students said that good behavior always gets noticed at school, 29 said that happened often, and 8 said it happened sometimes. Thirty students said that they always get along with other students, 33 said that happened often, and 8 said that happened sometimes. Fifty-nine students said that they always felt safe at school, seven said that happened often, and six said that it happened sometimes. Twenty-nine students said that students always treated each other with respect, 21 said that it happened often, 18 said it happened sometimes, and four said it never happened. Sixty-two students stated that there was always an adult at their school that would help them, 28 said that there was often one, and two said there was sometimes an adult to help them. Nineteen students said that students always behaved so that their teaches could teach, 29 said it happened often, 22 said sometimes, and two said that it never happened.

Figure 7

Perceptions about Yourself (Part 3)
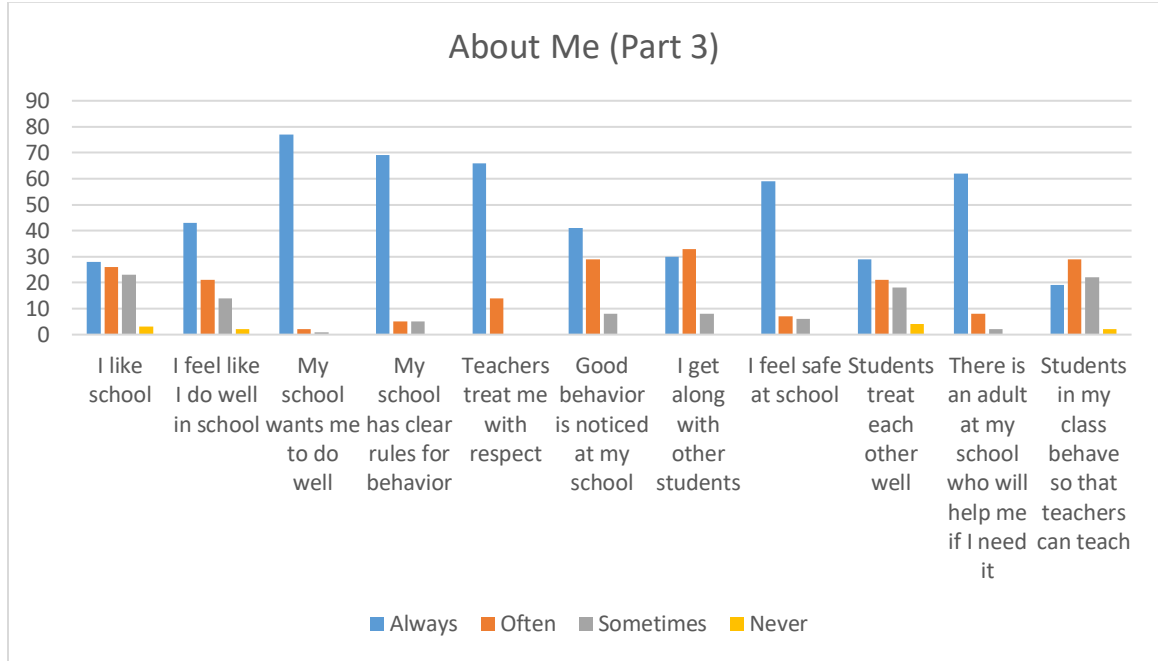
Discussion

The action research study analyzed the effect that the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan had on the school climate at Hasson Heights Elementary school from the perspectives of the student's and the staff, and it analyzed the effect that the plan had on the number of discipline referrals that were submitted to the office. The researcher used the data to determine the effectiveness of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan within the elementary school. The data reported that the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan had little to no effect on the number of discipline referrals that the principal's office received, but did prove to be more effective in creating and sustaining a positive school climate.

In the analysis of the office referrals, the data showed that the number of referrals from each category from the 2023-24 school year compared very closely to the three-year average from the years before the program's implementation. The number of altercations that happened between students actually rose, moving up to four referrals in the current school year. The number of students and staff altercations went down slightly, eight office referrals less, and the number of bus incidents moved from 152 down to 134, which the researcher determined was still comparable when looking at the scope of the entire school year.

The second research question that was analyzed was that of the effect that the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan had on the climate of the school. The majority of the staff members that were interviewed felt that the program had a positive impact on the school climate, there was little to no responses that were either neutral or negative. Staff answered questions regarding their perceptions of specific parts of the program as well as what they thought the students' perceptions of parts of the program, like the token economy, were. At most there were two negative or neutral responses to the questioning, and that only happened on one question.

In the area of school climate from the students' perspective the researcher looked to surveys that were completed by third and fourth grade students at the school. From the data collected, the students felt positively about the school; the majority of the students felt that their teachers were fair, willing to give students help, and felt safe in all areas of the school. Ninety percent of students stated that they strongly disagreed with the idea of going to a different school. The only question about school that the students seemed mixed about was the question asking if they were bored at school.

When being questioned about their teachers, the majority of the students agreed with statements like "my teachers really care about me," "homework I get helps me learn," and "Teachers help me do better on my work." Subsequently, the students strongly disagreed with the statement "teachers treat some students better than others." Therefore, the data collected from the survey indicated that the school climate was affected positively based on the students' relationships with their teachers.

The final portion of the survey had to do with the students' self-perceptions within the school. The overwhelming majority of answers that came back indicated a positive school climate at Hasson Heights, based on the students' perceptions of themselves. Students were caring and compassionate towards their other students, they had a positive rapport with their teachers, and had a positive perspective of the school as a whole.

Summary

The mixed-methods research provided both qualitative and quantitative data. The quantitative data comprised of the discipline referrals from before and after the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan and served to be inconclusive. The results did not show a significant difference in the number of referrals that came into the principal's office. While the number of bus discipline referrals and student against staff interactions did go down, the numbers were not enough to determine any level of significance in the effectiveness of the programming. The number of student against student interactions actually went up a small amount, once again making the results inconclusive.

In the qualitative portion of the research, the data that was collected from the interviews determined that the staff felt that the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan had a positive impact on the school climate. The other portion of the qualitative research was the student survey on school climate, and the results were generally positive and are discussed in the next chapter of this action research project.

Chapter V discusses conclusions, limitations of the actions research, recommendations for the future of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan, and changes that should be made to the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan.

CHAPTER V

Conclusions and Recommendations

This capstone action research project was designed to assess the effectiveness of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan in the following areas: number of discipline referrals and on the overall school climate. A School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan something that the administration at Hasson Heights Elementary School felt was required after a perceived increase in behaviors throughout the entire building, including classrooms, restrooms, busses, cafeteria, and more. To observer the larger picture of how the plan affected the school, the researcher set out to perform a mixed-methods study to collect quantitative data, which included discipline referrals compared to the three-year average from before the plan was implemented. To research the qualitative information, the researcher conducted two different forms of study. The first was an interview with the staff of the school to gain perspective on their thoughts of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan, its effectiveness on the overall school climate, as well as their thoughts on the students' perspectives of the programming. The second part of the qualitative research was in the form of a survey that was completed by the third and fourth graders at Hasson. This survey collected information on how the students felt about the school, their teachers, and themselves. This data and the other data mentioned above is discussed in this chapter to summarize the results of the study and answer the research questions.

The initial part of this chapter provides conclusions on the effectiveness of the programming based on the number of discipline referrals prior to the implementation of the program compared to the 2023-24 school year. The second part of this chapter focuses on the perceptional data from the perspective of the students and the staff.

Conclusions

Research Question 1

Research Question number one asked, "How has the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan affected the number of discipline referrals, including referrals on the bus, incidents between students against other students, and incidents between students and staff?" The design of the research was formulated in order to compare the average number of discipline referrals that were sent to the office over the three years prior to the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan against the number of referrals during the current 2023-24 school year. In addition to the total number of referrals the research attained data of sub-groups to include that of bus discipline referrals, student against other students discipline referrals, and student interactions with staff member referrals.

The quantitative data that was collected proved to be inconclusive more than anything. The number of bus referrals that the researcher collected when down from 152 over the three-year average to 134 during the 2023-24 school year. The number of referrals that had to do with student discipline involving staff members went down marginally also from 34 referrals to 26 discipline referrals. The number of discipline referrals that were submitted to the principal's office involving students' interactions against other students actually went up, though slightly, from 68 to 72. Though the number of referrals for bus altercations and students against staff members did decrease, the number of referrals was minimal and made it difficult to prove the effectiveness of the programing. In addition, the number of referrals involving students and other

students went up, very minimally, but this data also helped to conclude that the data collected based on this research question was inconclusive.

When analyzing the data provided from the school district's Student Information System the researcher was able to discover that the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan was not necessarily "effective" in lowering the number of discipline referrals within the Hasson Heights Elementary School. This was ever-so apparent in the collection of the student versus student discipline referrals since the number of discipline referrals went up from 68 to 72. The numbers in the other two subcategories did decline, but the difference was so subtle that the researcher was unable to make the determination that the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Plan made any reasonable difference in the behavior of the students in the school or not.

The overall conclusion of research question number one in regard to the effectiveness of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan in reducing the number of discipline referrals sent to the principal's office was not observed to be a wide margin. The number of referrals from the sub-category of student against other students was a difference of four referrals, and that actually went up after the implementation of the plan. The number of incidents that resulted in referrals involving students against staff went down by eight referrals. Lastly, the number of bus incident referrals depleted by 18 referrals that were submitted to the principal's office. Though two of the three sub-categories did move in the negative manner the results did not offer enough of a discrepancy to determine the program's effectiveness.

Research Question 2

The second research question, "How has the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan impacted the school climate from the perspective of the staff in grades kindergarten through four," revolved around the perception that the staff had about the program and the effect that it has had on the school climate. The interview questions also asked the staff what they felt the students' perceptions of the program was, in addition to specific parts of the program and how the teachers think it effects the daily routines and overall makeup of the school.

The first interview question had to do with the effect that the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan had on the discipline at school. The perceptual data conflicted the data from research question one. In regard to the perception of the programming, the teachers believed that the program was having a positive impact on the discipline of the school. Therefore, the program was believed to improve the school climate in this regard, or at least the perception was that the program was helping bring down the number of discipline referrals that were coming into the office.

Question number two was regarding the use of the program Class Dojo, and 100% of the staff though that the impact of this program was positive. The use of the program helped the school climate, especially with the ability for the parents to be a part of each and every positive or negative point that is give throughout the day. Therefore, the qualitative data collected from this question concluded that the tool was a positive for the school climate.

In the same fashion as the first question, 78% of the staff members that were
interviewed believed that the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan helped the discipline
in the common areas of the school. This was considered a positive for the school climate
because of statements like "the students are more aware of the expectations of the school.
Posters decorate the hallways and other common areas as reminders. Students are more
conscientious of their actions and how they affect others." This conclusion remained on
the positive side of the spectrum even though one staff member had a neutral response
and another thought that the plan had a negative impact because it was "rewarding
students for things they should already be doing anyway." The perceptual data continued
the trend that the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan was having a positive effect on the
school climate.

When asked about the student's perception of the School-Wide Positive Behavior
Plan, 100% of the staff members believed that the plan had a positive effect on the school
climate through the student's perspective. The driving force behind these results had to
do with the end of the grading period rewards and the TEAM day celebrations. Both of
these instances had an effect on the social aspect of the school climate. They allowed the
students to meet other students beyond the walls of their classroom or even grade level.
This truly did create a team atmosphere within the building that encompassed everyone,
making them feel they were a part of something greater than themselves.

The token economy was the focus of the next interview question. Much like the
majority of the previous questions, 78% of the staff members believed that the token
economy had a positive effect on the school climate as a whole. The effectiveness of the
token economy really seemed to correspond with the delivery on behalf of the staff. The

staff that seemed to believe that the token economy was just rewarding students for
"things that they should be doing anyways," were the staff members that were giving out
tickets just because they were required to hand them out. The staff members that created
an exciting environment in which the students were celebrated for receiving their tickets
were the staff members that felt that the token economy had a positive impact.

When discussing the students' perceptions of the token economy, the results
mirrored that of the staff's perceptions, with 78% of the staff having results that coded as
a positive influence on the school climate. There were a lot of variables that went into
these answers as well. It had to do with how intrinsically motivated the students were to
earn the rewards, were the rewards something that interested the students, how were the
teachers and staff members promoting the rewards, were the teachers and staff members
just going through the motions with awarding the tokens.

The biggest take-away from this portion of the questioning came from the
perspective of follow through. Children were very much persuaded by the actions of
those that were leading them, therefore the follow through on the token economy had a
drastic effect on the students' perspectives. The staff members that claimed that the
effect was neutral or negative were the same staff members that stated that the students
were being "rewarded for things that they should be doing already anyways." Therefore,
the school climate was affected more by the follow through of the token economy rather
than just the token economy itself. This was based on the data derived from the
perceptions of the students and the staff on the token economy at Hasson Heights.

When asked "if the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan has been a positive
addition to the school?" The conclusions indicated that eight of the staff members

believed that it has been a positive addition to the school, once again referring to the team

atmosphere within the building and the relationships that the students were able to

acquire between other students and staff members. The only response that was

considered neutral was stated by a staff member who did not feel that any sort of program

was going to help the entire culture. The feeling was more that the students were going

to do what the students were going to do no matter what the leaders of the school were

trying to put into place.

The next piece of the interview discussed the role that the School-Wide Positive

Behavior Plan had in the school community. The perception of all nine teachers and staff

members combined believed that the implementation of the School-Wide Positive

Behavior plan had a positive impact on the school climate as a whole. This perception

stemmed from the fact that there was an increase in communication between the teachers

and the staff members. The increase in communication created an environment that

enabled the parents to be involved with the student behavior, good or bad, in real time.

This environment helped cultivate a positive environment creating transparency.

The general conclusion that can be drawn regarding the second research question

is that the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan does help cultivate a positive school

climate, based on the perspectives of the staff that work within the school. The

perspectives included that of the staff, the staff's perception of the students, and the staff

perceptions of the community surrounding the school. Though there are more variables

to the school climate than just the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan, like instruction,

curriculum, and rapport between the students and staff that come into play also. The

School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan does have an effect on the day-to-day tone and feeling throughout the school.

Research Question 3

Conclusions from the third research question, "How has the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan impacted the school climate from the perspective of the students in grades three and four," were derived from a survey that was administered to the third and fourth grade students at Hasson Heights. The questions ranged from how the students felt about their school, their teachers, and themselves while in school. Though the answers did range from both ends of the spectrum on each of the questions, the majority of students did tend to answer very like-minded on a large portion of the questions.

Analysis on how the students felt about their school indicated that the students felt supported by their teachers and they felt very safe while they were at school. Characteristics in the survey questions included that the teachers were fair to all the students and that the students felt safe in their classroom, hallways, and outside the school. When asked if the students "wished they went to a different school," the students overwhelmingly selected that they strongly disagreed with that statement. This displays that the students like and appreciate the school and do not want to leave, this is favorable to a positive school climate at Hasson Heights. The only answer that was truly evenly distributed between strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree was, "I am bored in school;" this answer speaks more to the content that the students are learning and the activities that they are doing, rather than the overall school climate.

When questioned about how students treat other students in the school, the majority of students agreed that most students at the school were treated with respect, disagreed with the fact that students at their school were bullied, and disagreed with the notion that students at Hasson were teased, picked on, made fun of or called names. The conclusion from gathering this information sides on the notion that the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan has aided in the way that the students treat each other in the school setting. Respect among student's aides in building positive relationships throughout the school community. Positive relationships coupled with the fact that the students are able to interact throughout their grade level, across grade levels, and with teachers during their interactions on School-Wide Positive Behavior TEAM days helps create a community in which the students are supporting each other by example instead of the staff being the leaders. In this instance, the students are leading the way in creating a positive school climate.

When answering questions about the teachers at Hasson Heights, the students responded in a way that indicated that the teachers were there for them and cared about how they performed at school. Indicative of a school that has a positive school climate, the students felt that the teachers had their best interest in their decision making, instruction, and even the work that they gave their students. When analyzing the data from this portion of the survey, it is obvious that the students feel that their teachers are making decisions that will help them in the present and the near future. They treat everyone fairly, teachers notice if there is something that the students are having trouble with, and they help them with the work that they need help with. These attributes are those of which a positive school climate is present.

The final portion of the survey was aimed to provide feedback on how the students felt about themselves while in the school setting. The questions ranged from their self-control to how they felt they got along with other students in the school setting. The students of Hasson Heights had a very positive perspective of themselves. The majority of students agreed with the fact that they could self-regulate, they were in tune with how other students felt, and they respected what other students in the building thought. Their survey answers indicated things like they were able to calm themselves down, they were kind to other students, and they went out of their way to help other students within the school setting.

The two questions that really stood out to the researcher regarding the school climate were, "my school wants me to do well," and "my school has clear rules for behavior." These two questions more closely aligned with the relationship between the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan and school climate than any other questions in the survey.   The results of these two questions were in favor of the school wanting the students to do well and that the rules were clear and concise. The conclusion can only be that the school climate has benefited from the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan.

The research project was able to determine that the data collected from the perceptions of the staff and the students showed that the school does have a positive school climate, though the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan is not the only factor in overall assessment of school climate. The data collected from the quantitative portion of the research displayed that the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan did not have any effect on the number of discipline referrals that were sent to the office. The two are not

directly related, but it would be more acceptable to imply that the School-Wide Positive

Behavior Plan reduced discipline issues, therefore aiding in cultivating a more positive

school climate.

The number of variables that affect the school climate are vaster than just the

discipline of the students. The perceptions of the staff and the students did determine that

the school climate is positive, and the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan is a major

attribute to that, it is not the only attribute and that must be recognized. Therefore, the

conclusion from the effects of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan on the school

climate has several different layers to it. The effect on the student's discipline at this

particular elementary school did not result in a wide margin in a positive or negative

direction for office referrals.

The conclusions that can be drawn from the perceptions that the staff and students

had shown data that coincided with the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan having a

positive effect on the school climate at Hasson Heights. Perceptual data that was

connected to the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan that showed a positive effect

included data about bullying within the school, that teachers treat the students with

respect, that good behavior is noticed in the school, that the school has clear rules for

behavior, and responses regarding self-control. Therefore, based on the perception of the

students, as gathered from the school climate survey, the School-Wide Plan is having a

positive effect on a portion of the school climate.

Concluding the perceptions of the staff from the interviews that were conducted

also proved to be in favor of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan aiding in

cultivating a positive school climate. The staff members cited the communication that

was able to be had between the staff and the parents, the simplification of a behavior plan

that was inclusive of the entire building, and the students' school experiences being

positively affected by a token economy.   The staff also made the determination that the

students' perceptions of the School-Wide Plan was a positive influence on the school

climate as well.

      The conclusions of this action research project will be applied to the school

district in a variety of different ways. Initially it will provide some background

information for the other elementary schools to make a decision moving forward about

becoming a formally accredited School-Wide Positive Behavior School, like Hasson

Heights has accomplished. The perceptual data can be utilized in order to display how

the plan has affected the school climate and, essentially, how a plan would affect the

school climate in another school in the district.

      The information gathered from the school climate survey will be used to help

adapt the structure of the program in the future. The information gathered about how

students feel about themselves as well as how they think the teachers feel about them

validate the programming and will be utilized when planning events and the framework

of the programming in the future.

      Due to the fact that the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan is funded through the

Hasson Heights Booster Club, the plan and this study had no fiscal effects on the district.

If the other schools in the district did choose to adopt such a plan and the booster

organizations at those buildings were unwilling to provide funding for the same portions

of the plan that Hasson received them for, then there could be extremely minimal fiscal

implication on the overall operating budget of the district.

Limitations

There were several limitations to the action research project. Initially, the sample size of the students that completed the survey was only one-half of the third and fourth grade students in the school. Including twice the number of students in the survey could have altered the results of the perceptual study greatly in one way or the other. Additionally, the school consists of kindergarten, first, and second grade, also. Therefore, their perceptions of the school climate were left out of the results as well.

Though the overall perspective of the staff is in favor of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan being a positive influence on the school climate, there are other variables that need to be taken into account when coming up with a conclusion. The first variable would be the time of year that the interview was conducted. This interview took place close to the end of the school year. For the most part, the mood of the classroom teachers and staff members toward the end of the school year is greatly improved compared to the middle of the school year. Therefore, the perceptions of the teachers in the month of April would tend to be much more positive than if the interviews were conducted in the month of February when the attitudes of the staff are seemingly more negative.

Another variable that was not accounted for in the collection of data from the interviews was that of compatibility between the students and the staff. There are cases in the education environment that the rapport between the students and the staff members just is not positive for one reason or another. This could contribute to a staff member not feeling that the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan is effective. This could also be a variable in what the staff believes the students perceive about the plan.

With the knowledge of how many different attributes of the school can and will affect the school climate, it is difficult to determine how much the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan really did affect it. Because the plan encompasses the entire school from the classroom to the hallways, the cafeteria to the playground, it certainly has to have some sort of effect on the school, but the amount is unknown.

Additional limitations on the interviews that were conducted were that they did not include all of the staff. There was only one staff member selected to be interviewed from each grade level. Additionally, there was only one paraprofessional from the primary grades and the intermediate grades selected, one teacher from the special areas, and one specialist. Therefore, only approximately one-fourth of the staff was interviewed for their perception of the school climate, and therefore, many opinions and perceptions were left out of the results.

The last notable limitation from the interview portion of the project was that the perceptions of the community or parents were not directly obtained. The staff were asked about their perceptions of what the community felt instead. Therefore, the data that was collected was not that of the actual community, but of the perception that the staff has of the community.

Limitations that existed from the data collected referring to research question number one consisted of the limiting the categories of referral data. The only discipline referrals that were used in the study consisted of those of students against students, students against staff, and the bus incidents that occurred. These incidents are a small percentage of the overall referrals that come in throughout the school. Comparing more categories of referrals could have aided the researcher in determining with more validity

if the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan was more or less effective than what was

determined in the project.

A secondary limitation from the first research question was that the collection of

data was not equal in length of time for the before and after comparison. The data

collected from before the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan was implemented was

over a span of three years, and the amount of time that the data was collected from after

the plan's implementation was only one year. Therefore, the data was not equal on both

sides of the comparison

Recommendations for Future Research

The recommendations based on the results of this research in addition to the

limitations that were determined by the researcher would start in the area of time. The

comparison of one year of statistical data to the average of three years of data was not

ample enough. The comparison needs to be one-to-one. This particular research study

did not allow for the comparison of equal amounts of time due to the timeline of

implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan and the action research

project.

In addition to comparing equal time periods, the recommendation would be to

include more discipline referrals to the statistical analysis. In order to determine more of

what needs to be collected, the future researcher should include the elements of the

school climate survey to the interview questions given to the staff to have data that

compares more equally across the study.

While the perceptions of the staff seemed very much in favor of a positive school climate in relation to the addition of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan, the question of bias still needs to be asked in reference to the researcher who is also the administrator of the building asking the interview questions to the staff. The notion that the staff would answer the questions to "help" the administrator with the research does exist and should be recognized. Therefore, if the questions were asked by a neutral party or the researcher was interviewing staff that did not work under them, it would take the bias factor out of the equation.

The researcher would also recommend that for future assessments of effectiveness, a survey for the primary grades be implemented as well. Due to the nature of conducting research, there is never one-hundred percent participation. Therefore, it would behoove future researchers to broaden the overall scope of individuals being involved in the study. To do that a survey needs to be adapted for students in kindergarten through second grade that enable them to participate fully. This would enable future research to include the younger students and allow for their perceptions to be collected along with everyone else.

A future research project in this area would need to be more encompassing of the disciplinary data to see the real effectiveness. Therefore, the researcher would recommend that this study become broader in a secondary study, to include community surveys, more staff involvement, and a more in-depth look at the overall discipline referrals that are coming into the office and their reasoning. This needs to be compared on an even timeline, allowing several more years for the plan to become more entrenched in the school's culture.   Meaning that the future researcher will need to compare yearly

data on a one-to-one basis. The addition to these variables would create a more balanced

and effective study.

Summary

Each step in the completion of this action research project was beneficial to the

researcher as well as the future of the programming at Hasson Heights and the Oil City

Area School District. Gaining perspectives from both the students and the staff on how

the school climate has been affected by the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan, in

addition to other variables, is going to aid in future plans for the program. The data that

collected in the quantitative portion of the research will also help with future planning.

Through conducting this research, other schools within the district, and beyond,

will be able to see the affect that the plan has on the overall climate through the

perceptions that were discussed. The students feel that there is always someone there for

them, they feel that the guidelines are clear and concise, and the staff like the consistency.

All of this qualitative data can be referenced when a leader at another building is

attempting to bring the staff together around a singular behavioral program for the entire

building.

In addition to the future ramifications that this project can and will have on the

future of behavioral management in the district, the researcher was also able to gain

perspective from the literature review section of the project. This perspective came from

areas of how School-Wide Positive Behavior Plans affected test scores, relationships

between students and staff, and what school climate is and the effect that it has on the

building. This information was useful to the overall process and allowed the researcher

to have a more global view of the issues that were going to be researched.

Conducting this action research project was useful for the researcher in several

different ways. It allowed the researcher to gain perspective of how a portion of the staff

felt about the School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan. It allowed the researcher to see all

the different variables that make up a school climate and how much more there is to be

researched in the future, not just the plan and its effect on the climate. This study also

helped the researcher see there is possibly some more that needs to happen before the

staff starts to see a big difference in the discipline referrals that are coming into the

principal's office. The project shed light on the areas that are flourishing and those that

need to be improved, and the researcher will set out to further their research on those

aspects in the future while making adjustments.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter

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

Dear Matt Siembida,

Please consider this email as official notification that your proposal titled "The Effect of a School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan on Student Discipline Frequency and School Culture of Students and Staff" (Proposal #PW23-025) has been approved by the Pennsylvania Western University Institutional Review Board as submitted.

The effective date of approval is 09/18/2023 and the expiration date is 09/17/2023. 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 09/17/2024, 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 B

Staff Interview Questions

1. How has the school-wide positive behavior plan affected the discipline within the school?

2. Do you feel that the school-wide positive behavior plan has lessened the discipline in your classroom? If so, how?

3. Do you think the school-wide behavior plan has lessened the discipline of your students in the common areas? (hallways, cafeteria, etc.) If so, how?

4. In your opinion, what is the student's perception of the school-wide positive behavior plan?

5. What is your perception of the token economy?

6. What is the student's perception of the token economy? Is this something that the students want to work for through positive behavior?

7. Has the school-wide positive behavior plan been a positive addition to Hasson Heights? What are the examples of this?

8. Do you feel that the parents are on board with the school-wide behavior plan, and how do you think we could improve the parent's involvement?

Appendix C

Student Participation Slip

Oil City Area School District

Hasson Heights Elementary

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am attempting to conduct an action research project as part of my graduate studies. To better understand and improve our school's climate, we are conducting a survey that will help me gather valuable insights from our students, including those in the 3rd and 4th grades.

Purpose of the Survey:

The survey aims to collect students' perspectives on various aspects of our school environment, such as safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school's physical environment. The information collected will identify strengths and areas for improvement in our school's climate and will help inform us to make positive changes here at Hasson Heights.

Survey Details:

- Participants: 3rd and 4th grade students
- Date: During your child's scheduled guidance lesson in April.
- Format: The survey will be conducted during school hours and take approximately 15 minutes.
- Confidentiality: The survey is anonymous, and aggregate responses will only be reported. No individual responses will be identifiable.

Permission to Participate:

Your child's participation in this survey is completely voluntary. Please read and complete the section below to indicate whether you grant permission for your child to participate in the School Climate Survey.

(OVER)

PERMISSION SLIP

Student's Name: _____

Grade: _____

I, [Parent/Guardian's Name] _____, give permission for my child,
[Child's Name] _____, to participate in the School Climate Survey.

☐ Yes, I permit my child to participate in the School Climate Survey.
☐ No, I do not permit my child to participate in the School Climate Survey.

Parent/Guardian's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please return this permission slip to your child's teacher by April 1, 2024]. Please do not
hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or concerns about the survey or your
child's participation.

Thank you for your cooperation and support in helping us improve our school's climate.

Sincerely,

Mr. Matthew Siembida
Principal
Supervisor of Elementary Special Education
Hasson Heights
814-677-8021

You may request a copy of the survey or scan the QR code below to view it on your
personal device.