5-9-2015

School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports: A Case Study Measuring Implementation Fidelity and Implementation Impact

Dustin Dykes

ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, SCHOOL WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTIONS AND SUP-PORTS: A CASE STUDY MEASURING IMPLEMENTATION FIDELITY AND EXAMIN-ING IMPLEMENTATION IMPACT, by DUSTIN ANTHONY DYKES, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Education, in the College of Education, Georgia State University.

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SCHOOL-WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS:
A CASE STUDY MEASURING IMPLEMENTATION FIDELITY AND EXAMINING
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by

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Under the Direction of Jami Berry

ABSTRACT

Many schools struggle with effectively managing student behavior. In recent decades, a large number of schools have implemented a system of positive behavior interventions and supports in an attempt to reduce the time that students spend out of the classroom addressing behavioral issues. This dissertation investigates the use of a program, School Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS), through an examination of results provided from the program implementation in a middle school in the Southeastern United States. The School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET) is the primary instrument used in this case study and is designed to collect both quantitative data and qualitative data from school observations and structured interviews with administrators, teachers, and students. In total, more than 25 structured interviews were conducted regarding the SWPBIS implementation. Other techniques of data collection in-

clude (a) additional opened ended response questions directed to teachers in the school, (b) a comparison of the number of office discipline referrals (ODRs), and (c) the number of expulsions prior to and after SWPBIS implementation. SWPBIS has few if any implementation studies conducted in the Southeastern United States; therefore, this study adds to the middle school literature regarding SWPBIS implementation and contribute some additional impact measures that may not be directly assessed in other studies.

INDEX WORDS: School referrals, Behavior interventions, Evaluation tool

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A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the

Degree of

Doctor of Education

in

Educational Leadership

in

Educational Policy Studies

in

the College of Education

Georgia State University

Atlanta, GA
2015

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife. She has made this work possible!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my wife Jennifer Dykes who has made this dissertation possible. She has entertained our kids and provided the time and support I needed to complete this incredible task. I would also like to acknowledge my children Layla and Easton who have had to spend many hours away from me as I have completed this work. I love you all with my whole heart and I hope the completion of this degree and dissertation allows me the opportunities to ensure that all of your dreams come true. Finally, I would like to acknowledge my committee members who have helped me through this process. Dr. Jami Berry kept me on schedule and provided the support I needed to make sure this work was completed. She has been a great leader for me and all of cohort one at Georgia State University. Dr. Jennifer Esposito has also been essential to this finished product in providing me with honest feedback and resources to improve this dissertation. Lastly, Dr. Walter Stephens has provided encouragement, opportunity, and understanding as I have completed this with him. This has been an outstanding journey that I complete with overwhelming pride.

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1 SCHOOL DISCIPLINE: WHAT IS WRONG AND WHAT IS RIGHT

Managing inappropriate student behavior is an important component in the success of any school (Nelson, 1996; Rose & Gallup, 1998; Walker, Ramsey, & Gresham, 2004). In recent decades, the idea of using a system of School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) has gained much attention (Sugai & Horner, 2002). The original concept of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) began in the 1980s. Sugai and Simonsen explain that "researchers at the University of Oregon began a series of applied demonstrations, research studies, and evaluation projects" that were focused on prevention of inappropriate behavior (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012, p. 1).

These efforts aimed to provide evidence that reducing inappropriate behavior could be effectively accomplished by focusing on research based practices, providing appropriate interventions, and collecting and analyzing data. PBIS gained significant attention when amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) became law on June 4, 1997 (Sugai, Sprague, Horner, &Walker, 2000). This new law required that the Individual Education Plan (IEP) Team, for individuals with "impeding behavior," create strategies including positive behavioral interventions and supports to address behavior (Turnbull, Wilcox, Stowe, Turnbull, 2001). *Impeding behavior* is defined as any behavior that affects the individual student's learning or the learning of their peers in the classroom (Turnbull et al., 2001). Since 1997, the concept of PBIS has grown, in fact, positive behavior interventions are not only being used for individuals with disabilities but also on school or district-wide levels for all students.

Guiding Questions

The major focus of this study is to determine to what degree the implementation of School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) impacts Office Discipline

Referrals (ODRs) and expulsions in one middle school located in the Southeastern United States. The study also measures the level of fidelity that the school experienced in implementing the SWPBIS system. There is a brief examination of teachers' perception of the system's impact on classroom management plans and other possible impacts that the system may have within the school. The following research questions guide the study.

1. What impact has SWPBIS implementation had on ODRs?

2. What impact has SWPBIS implementation had on expulsions?

3. What is the level of fidelity to which the identified school has implemented SWPBIS?

4. What impact has SWPBIS implementation had on teachers' classroom management plans?

5. What other impact(s) is the system having on the school?

Review

Most of the school-wide implementation research suggests that the implementation of a PBIS system has positive effects on student behavior (Caldarella, Shatzer, Gray, Young, & Young, 2011; Lassen, Steele, & Sailor, 2006; Luiselli, Putnam, Handler & Feinberg, 2005; Miramontes, Marchant, Heath, & Fischer, 2011; Muscott, Mann, Benjamin, Gately, Bell, & Muscott, 2004; Muscott, Mann, & LeBrun, 2008; Pas & Bradshaw, 2012; Ruiz, Ruiz, & Sherman, 2012; Sadler, 2000; Sadler & Sugai, 2009; Sherrod, Getch, & Ziomek, 2009; Sprague et al., 2001; Warren et al., 2003). However, the system can look very differently from school to school. In order for the system to be effective, it should not only have individual plans for identified students but should also have "as a primary goal, the implementation of prevention practices that target the entire school population" (Luiselli et al., 2005, p. 184).

Introduction to literature.

The twenty-first century American public school is an institution facing many difficulties. One of the major difficulties is effectively managing inappropriate student behavior (Nelson, 1996; Rose & Gallup, 1998; Walker et al., 2004). Inappropriate behavior often leads to students missing class time due to office referrals (Arnold, 1997). Often, these referrals lead to punitive actions including detention, suspensions, or expulsions. These consequences also have a negative impact on student learning because the inappropriate behavior often forces the student to miss additional valuable class time (Irvin et al. 2006; Pas, Bradshaw, & Mitchell, 2011; Walker et al. 1996). Throughout much of the history of American public schools, the philosophy has been that if a student misbehaves, he or she should have punitive consequences for the behavior (Skiba, Eckes, & Brown, 2010). These consequences may include parent notification of the inappropriate behavior, sending students to the office to receive reprimand, or corporal punishment. However, these consequences often have little impact on improving student behavior and instead may actually have a negative impact on the students and the school as a whole (Brown, 2007; Skiba & Knesting, 2001; Wald & Losen, 2003).

This paper explains how ideas such as "zero-tolerance" have led to unfair punishments being assigned to students for minor behavior infractions. It also examines the idea of discretionary discipline, in which a school administrator is left to make a decision regarding consequences that he or she feels is appropriate for the inappropriate behavior. This researcher will document how this discretionary discipline has played a major role in creating disproportionate numbers in school discipline relating to males, minorities, and students with disabilities. In addition, exclusionary discipline, a practice which removes a student from the classroom setting, such as in school suspension, out of school suspension, and expulsion, will be discussed.

Furthermore, the detrimental consequences of exclusionary discipline, including ideas such as "push out" and the "school-to-prison pipeline," will be explained. Finally, this review will offer a possible solution to the many problems that American public schools are facing in the area of discipline. In the late twentieth century, the philosophy of the American public school began to change from a reactive measure, meaning punishing the student after the inappropriate behavior, to a more proactive measure of teaching and recognizing positive behavior up front (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012). In an attempt to reduce office referrals and improve student learning, many schools began and continue to implement a system of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS).

Defining discipline.

In an attempt to define the purpose of the American public school, one may look to the mission of the United States Department of Education. The mission is "to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access" (What We Do, 2010). However, when examining the idea and processes of "discipline" in the American public school, the goals of achievement, educational excellence, and equality are not often obtained. The word discipline can mean several different things according to the person or context in which it is being used or examined. When simply searching dictionary.com online, nine different definitions are provided for the word discipline as a noun as well as three additional definitions as a verb. According to Onderi and Odera (2012), teachers who struggle with classroom management see discipline as a negative word involving punishment, pain, or fear. In the same paper, the authors provide an additional definition: according to Were (2006), "the word discipline means a system of guiding the individuals to make responsible decisions responsibly" (p. 710). It seems as though a highly functioning classroom or school

would consist of teachers and administrators whose thoughts on discipline more clearly align with Were's definition. There is an idea that is often quoted in educator professional learning from former National Association of State Directors of Special Education President Tom Herner (1998) that reads:

> "If a child doesn't know how to read, we teach."
> "If a child doesn't know how to swim, we teach."
> "If a child doesn't know how to multiply, we teach."
> "If a child doesn't know how to drive, we teach."
> "If a child doesn't know how to behave, we…………teach? ………..punish?"
> "Why can't we finish the last sentence as automatically as we do the others?"

An effective American public school must attempt to teach appropriate behavior with the same determination as it attempts to teach math or reading. School discipline must be used to teach young people appropriate social behavior, so that they will be successful in school and throughout their lives after graduation.

Evolution of discipline.

In addition to understanding the differing definitions and approaches to the idea of discipline in schools, it is important to be familiar with the changes that have happened in the discipline process over the past several decades. Skiba et al. (2010) explain that through the 1960's corporal punishment was the most common form of discipline disseminated, if a student was exhibiting inappropriate behavior. They go on to explain that in the 1970's suspensions began to take the place of physical punishment. Though some states or school districts still allow corporal punishment, exclusionary discipline and punishment are now the more common consequence for office discipline referrals (ODRs) (Horner et al., 2005). Cohen (2012) explains that "exclusionary discipline refers to any disciplinary action that removes a student from the typical classroom setting" (para. 3). Therefore, exclusionary discipline would include, but not be limited to, in-school suspension (ISS), out of school suspension (OSS), referral to an alternative setting, or ex-

pulsion. Much of the current literature discussing exclusionary discipline explains that even though there is no evidence to prove that it is effective in improving the assigned student's behavior, it continues to be assigned (Fenning & Rose, 2007; Rausch, Skiba, & Simmons, 2004).

In 1975, a major event occurred relating to school discipline involving the Supreme Court case of *Goss v. Lopez* (Shah and McNeil, 2013). This case involved several teenage students including Dwight Lopez, who were suspended over a disturbance in the school lunchroom without a hearing. Lopez maintained that he was not involved in the incident and was not provided an opportunity to explain what happened. The court ruled in favor of Lopez, which led to the requirement that all students must be allowed due process in dealing with an inappropriate behavior situation that may lead to consequences being assigned. Meek (2009) explains, "Justice White's majority opinion recognized that the state's interest in school discipline proceedings is not merely to preserve school order but also to develop a dialogue with misbehaving students as part of the teaching process" (p. 156). Meek also explains that the Goss case, as well as other Supreme Court cases on constitutional rights of students, have aimed to ensure that all students get an education rather than exclude students demonstrating inappropriate behavior. Therefore, if a student is assigned exclusionary discipline, it should not serve merely as a punishment or to provide the teacher or administrator a break from the student.

This form of discipline should involve some *reflection* on the part of the student, and *planning* by all stakeholders on how the student can be more successful once he or she returns to the regular classroom setting. However, this method of assigning exclusionary discipline with reflection and planning is often not practiced. Since the *Goss v. Lopez* case out of school suspensions and expulsions have tripled from nearly one million in the 1970's to over three million in the 1990's (Brooks, Schiraldi, & Zeidenberg, 2000). According to studies (Meek, 2009; Skiba,

2008), the increase in exclusionary discipline is due in large part to the rise of "zero-tolerance" policies.

Zero-Tolerance.

Before discussing the zero-tolerance rise of the 1990's, it is important to note the impact of Joe Clark. He was a principal in a New Jersey High School in 1982 who took a tough stance on school discipline and ultimately rose to national popularity (Shah & Mcneil, 2013). His practices may have helped lay the foundation for zero-tolerance. Shah and McNeil (2013) explain, on one day during the first week of school Mr. Clark expelled 300 students for inappropriate behavior. Mr. Clark was often seen carrying a baseball bat that intensified his "get-tough" attitude on school discipline. Soon his school was named a model school and Mr. Clark was named one of the 10 "Principals of Leadership" by the U.S. Department of Education. He was also featured on the cover of TIME magazine and honored in the film "Lean on Me."

Shah and McNeil (2013) suggest that Mr. Clark's actions may have been a spark that led to the national attention of violence in schools. Regardless of whether he was a catalyst or not, Martinez (2009) explains that in the late 1980's and early 1990's, Americans began to perceive public schools as unsafe. In response to the opinions of society, legislatures felt that they needed to respond with tough new laws to address these "unsafe" schools. Therefore, the zero-tolerance policy was introduced into education. The concept of zero-tolerance was adopted from the U.S. Customs Agency, which was focused on stopping drug trafficking. Meek (2009) expounds by writing:

> Zero-tolerance education policies gained prominence in the late 1980s and early 1990s after school districts in California, New York, and Kentucky enacted mandatory expulsion policies for drugs, fighting, and gang-related activity. By 1993, zero-tolerance policies were adopted across the country and often expanded to include mandatory expulsions for smoking and school disruption. The federal government cemented this trend in 1994 by enacting the Gun-Free Schools Act,

which requires local educational agencies to mandate a one-year expulsion for students who bring weapons to school. (p. 158)

On the surface, this notion of zero-tolerance may seem like a good idea. These policies were created with the intent to keep schools safe. However, Martinez (2009) writes, "after inspecting the effect of these policies on our schools, it becomes apparent that there is more evidence that they do more harm than good" (p. 153). This idea is further evidenced through a study completed by an American Psychological Association task force (2008) led by Russell Skiba that concluded:

> An examination of evidence shows that zero tolerance policies as implemented have failed to achieve the goals of an effective system of school discipline. Zero tolerance has not been shown to improve school climate or school safety. Its application in suspension and expulsion has not proven an effective means of improving student behavior. It has not resolved, and indeed may have exacerbated, minority over-representation in school punishments. Zero tolerance policies as applied appear to run counter to our best knowledge of child development. By changing the relationship of education and juvenile justice, zero tolerance may shift the locus of discipline from relatively inexpensive actions in the school setting to the highly costly process of arrest and incarceration. In so doing, zero tolerance policies have created unintended consequences for students, families, and communities. (p.860)

It is clear that zero tolerance policies are not accomplishing the intended goal of preventing inappropriate behavior and making schools safer. Instead, the policies may have created additional problems for communities.

Discretionary discipline.

As mentioned earlier, exclusionary discipline is a consequence assigned for inappropriate behavior that removes a student from the regular classroom setting. Though exclusionary discipline may be appropriate for the most serious of offenses such as drugs or weapons, it is often being used for much lesser offenses (Fowler, 2011; Pfleger &Wiley, 2012). Fowler (2011) explains that in Texas during the 2009-2010 school year, "68% of student referrals to disciplinary

alternative schools were discretionary, as were 72% of all student expulsions from Texas schools. Most student removals from the regular classroom were for disruptive behavior where no injury or weapon was involved" (p. 16). Fowler (2011) also discusses a study by Texas Appleseed which concluded African American students received a percentage of discretionary expulsions for nonviolent offenses that was more than double the total percentage of the population of African American students. The same study also revealed that during the 2008-2009 school year, 90 kindergarten and 456 first graders were expelled and sent to an alternative school program for discretionary reasons.

Pfleger and Wiley (2012) found similar alarming numbers relating to administrator assignment of exclusionary discipline in the state of Colorado. Their study found that administrators were more likely to assign out of school suspension more than any other consequence at 53% followed by in-school suspension at 31.8%. With this high rate of suspension, only 1.2% of the reported behaviors were considered serious, such as weapons, robbery, or assault, while 85.5% of the behaviors were considered discretionary. These two studies are indicative of other findings and therefore, the number of students receiving Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) for minor offenses does not warrant the number of suspensions and expulsions that occur throughout the United States.

Exclusionary discipline

If there were sufficient research to support suspensions or expulsions as appropriate interventions in changing unwanted student behavior, then exclusionary discipline may be justifiable for minor offenses. However, the research does not exist to support suspensions and expulsions as effective and actually in most cases argues that they are ineffective and even detrimental (Dupper, Theriot, & Craun, 2009; Gregory, 2012). Dupper et al. (2009) explicate that Out of

School Suspensions (OSSs) is sometimes effective in providing a temporary break for teachers and administrators and in getting parents to understand that their child's misbehavior is serious. However, they go on to explain that OSS to the student is more of a "school holiday" and that the students who are suspended are the same students who are less likely to have supervision at home during the suspension. They illustrate through the citing of several sources that

> This is a serious concern in that youths who are not in school are more likely to have lower rates of academic achievement, to smoke, to use substances (for example, alcohol, marijuana, cocaine), to engage in sexual intercourse, to become involved in physical fights, to carry a weapon, and are far more likely to commit crimes and be incarcerated. Moreover, there is evidence that a past suspension is a predictor of a future suspension…for a large number of at-risk youths, being suspended leads to significant problems outside of school, increases the likelihood of receiving additional OSSs, and may result in dropping out of school. (p. 6)

Gregory (2012) also argues against OSS by explaining that the suspension may serve as a negative reinforcement as the child, while at home, may likely "escape from the boredom of school and into the stimulating world of video games" (p. 207). She also says, that while at home, students may connect with other students who have been suspended or are truant, which may lead to additional inappropriate behavior.

"Push Out" and criminalizing student behavior.

Other researchers who argue against suspensions and expulsions write about the "push out" phenomenon, which indicate that schools contribute to their own drop-out rates by suspending students out of school who eventually give up and stay at home. Cole and Heilig (2011) elucidate that even though youth crime has decreased over the past two decades, school discipline has become more punitive. The authors state, "Schools have increasingly imposed harsher sanctions on students resulting in a systematic and pervasive 'pushing out' of children from schools and into the juvenile justice system" (p. 306). Fowler (2011) also discusses the fact that the discretionary decisions of teachers and administrators contribute to the push out effect. A report

from the Civil Rights project of 2000 says suspensions and expulsions are especially damaging

to students considered 'at-risk' for school failure because the situation often leads to pushing

them out of school completely. These authors all agree that this push-out, in addition to other in-

appropriate discipline practices, then leads to what researchers call the *"school-to-prison pipe-*

line." Wald and Losen (2003) explain:

> In recent years, several new terms have gained currency in public discourse to de-
> scribe the cumulative impact of these inequalities and policy shifts: "the prison
> track," and the "school-to-prison pipeline." These phrases refer to a journey
> through school that is increasingly punitive and isolating for its travelers—many
> of whom will be placed in restrictive special education programs, repeatedly sus-
> pended, held back in grade, and banished to alternative "outplacements" before
> finally dropping or getting "pushed out" of school altogether. (p. 1)

Gonzalez (2012) says, "Scholars, lawyers, policy makers, educators, and activists have labeled

the school-to-prison pipeline as one of the most pressing civil and human rights challenges" (p.

292).

Cole and Heilig (2011) also consider ticketing students for inappropriate behavior as a

factor in criminalizing behavior. The researchers provide information from a Texas Appleseed

study of 22 of the largest school districts in Texas that found 1,000 tickets were written to ele-

mentary school students in 10 of the districts including students as young as six. Also, all dis-

tricts increased their police presence in schools, and some increased their number of tickets writ-

ten by 95%. Fowler adds of the same study that an "overwhelming majority" of the tickets were

written for minor offenses such as class disruptions that used to result in a visit to the principal.

Cole and Heilig explain:

> The use of tickets in very real terms criminalizes student behavior. Misdemeanor
> tickets are disposed of in municipal court. Tickets can carry with them fines rang-
> ing from $50 to $500, require students and a guardian to appear in court and can
> potentially stay on a student's record into adulthood. (p. 308)

The education system should not criminalize student behavior. Educators should attempt to teach appropriate social behavior in an effort to help students as they move into adulthood. The harmful impact of criminalizing students while they are young could lead the belief that they are not capable of following the rules of society and therefore they may expect to be incarcerated.

Disproportionality.

If the harmful impact of zero-tolerance, exclusionary discipline, discretionary discipline, and discipline that criminalizes American students were not enough to make the reader question the current system of discipline in American schools, the alarmingly disproportional numbers of student populations based on gender, race, and ability level involved in school discipline practices certainly will (Bryan, Day-Vines, Griffin, & Moore-Thomas, 2012; Booker & Mitchell, 2011; Kleiner, Porch, & Farris, 2002; Pfleger & Wiley, 2012; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002; Vincent, Sprague, & Tobin, 2012; Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace & Bachman, 2008). Pfleger and Wiley (2012) found in their study of Colorado discipline data from 2008-2010 that Black students were assigned disciplinary actions at three times the rate of White students and received OSS at four times the rate of White students. The study also found that Latino and American Indian students were assigned OSS at twice the rate of White students. Finally, their research revealed that the male discipline assignment rate was 21.7% while the female was 8.2%. Vincent, Tobin, Hawken, & Frank (2012) experienced similar findings and concluded:

> There seems to be little doubt that the persistent disproportionate over-representation of African-American, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and Hispanic students in exclusionary disciplinary actions is inconsistent with the mission of the United States public education system to educate every child. (p. 591)

In an additional study, Bryan at al. (2012) describe disproportionality through the "composition index." Basically, this index says that the total percentage of a racial/ethnic population of the whole should closely correlate with the total percentage of ODRs of the same racial/ethnic

group as compared to the total number of ODRs. For example, if African Americans make up

15% of a school, school system, or state, then African Americans should account for about 15%

of the ODRs. However, in 1997 African Americans made up 17% of the public school popula-

tion but accounted for 32% of all suspensions (Brooks, Schiraldi, & Ziedenberg, 2000). Bryan et

al. cite several sources in explaining:

> Although certain research hypotheses identify risks, such as poverty experienced
> by some students of color, as possible explanations for these disparities, race ap-
> pears to be a significant predictor of disparities in referral, suspension, and expul-
> sion rates over and above socioeconomic status (SES) across all learning envi-
> ronments. (p. 177)

The researchers also provide numbers from a University of Michigan study that con-

cludes that there were only small differences in the total violations for drugs, weapons, and alco-

hol between Caucasian and African American students. However, for minor offenses, African

American students were 30% more likely to receive ODRs and 333% more likely to receive a

suspension or expulsion when compared to Caucasian students (Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, &

Bachman, 2008). When Bryan et al. conducted their own study of close to 5,000 high school

sophomores, they found that males were 3 times more likely than females and African Ameri-

cans were 71% more likely than Caucasian students to receive referrals to the school counselor

for inappropriate behavior by their English teachers.

Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson (2002) go beyond race and gender to explain that stu-

dents who received free school lunch and whose fathers did not have full time jobs were more

likely to be suspended when compared to those who pay for lunch or whose fathers were em-

ployed full time (Skiba, Peterson, and Williams, 2007; Wu, Pink, Crain, and Moles, 1982). They

also explain that African Americans often receive harsher punishments and, in one eye-opening

statistic, that Black males were 16 times as likely as White females to receive corporal punishment (Gregory, 1995). Skiba et al. continue by writing:

> Given the ubiquity of findings of African-American overrepresentation in a variety of school punishments, it is surprising that there are virtually no extant studies exploring in more detail the reasons for disproportionate representation…. investigations of behavior, race, and discipline have yet to provide evidence that African-American students misbehave at a significantly higher rate than other students. (p. 320)

In the Skiba et al. study of 11,000 middle school students, researchers found that Black males were overrepresented in all areas of school discipline, including referrals, suspensions, and expulsions even after controlling for socioeconomic status.

It is clear from the previously referenced literature that the system for discipline in the American public school is in need of examination. The unsuccessful ideas, including zero-tolerance, exclusionary discipline, and discretionary discipline which have led to "push out," the "school-to-prison pipeline," and overwhelming disproportionality, must continue to be investigated and corrected through solid research. Onderi and Odera (2012) state

> The Principal/Head teacher and staff should therefore be very careful in deciding what punishment to administer to students who go against school rules and regulations because each offense requires different disciplinary action and different punishment as well. Any member of the staff should consider whether it is fitting to punish a child and needs to be clear about the educational and moral obligations and even psychological impact it can cause or produce. (p. 714)

As mentioned in the introduction, steps have been taken in the right direction through changes to the IDEA legislation in 1997 requiring that all students with disabilities have, as part of their IEP, a plan for positively addressing impeding behavior. Congress again made changes to IDEA in 2004. "The revised law requires schools to ask detailed questions about an incident to determine the cause of a student's actions instead of issuing consequences when a student's disability is to blame" (Shah & McNeil, 2013, p. 9). Though these steps are great for students with

disabilities, the logical question that may arise is this: Should educators not apply these same ideas to all of the students in American public schools? Shah and McNeil note that Lindsay Jones, senior director of policy and advocacy services for the Council for Exceptional Children, and her organization "encourage the use of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, or PBIS, including a bill that would infuse the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (currently the No Child Left Behind Act) with the approach, which emphasizes teaching students how to behave and rewarding positive behavior" (p. 9). There is extensive research that has been conducted on PBIS and the impact that it can have students and schools.

Definition and origin of positive behavior interventions and supports.

In reviewing positive behavior literature, it is important to first note that two different terms are often used by researchers. Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) are used interchangeably at the preference of the researcher. For the purposes of this review, this researcher will use PBIS, as this is most frequently used in the researcher's geographical area. Carr et al. (2002) explains PBIS is an applied science that includes "research-based strategies used to increase quality of life and decrease problem behavior by teaching new skills and making changes in a person's environment" (p. 4). Though PBIS may be defined differently by different researchers and look different from school to school, the focus should always remain on improving a child's quality of life and reducing problem behaviors (Carr et al., 2002). Finally, it is important to know that later in the review, the terminology of School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) will be used as well. SWPBIS will be a major component of the literature review and the following evaluation.

Horner (2000) defines PBIS slightly differently than Carr as he focuses on people with disabilities by writing

Positive behavior support is the application of behavior analysis to the social problems created by such behaviors as self-injury, aggression, property destruction, pica, defiance, and disruption. It is an approach that blends values about the rights of people with disabilities with a practical science about how learning and behavior change occur. (p. 97)

As previously mentioned, positive behavior support was made law under changes to the IDEA in 1997. Turnbull et al. (2001) explain:

There are two key situations under which IDEA's PBS requirements may come into effect. The first is during development of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for students with disabilities for whom "impeding behavior" is known to be a problem. The second is for students with disabilities who already have an IEP but face disciplinary action because of their behavior. (p. 11)

Turnbull et al. define impeding behavior as behaviors that would impede the learning of the student or students, behaviors that could cause the student to be disciplined by law or regulation, or behaviors that consistently recur which would require a functional behavior assessment (FBA). Weber (2006) points out that students with disabilities who are in violation of a school rule and who have an appropriate IEP and Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) may be suspended from school for up to a maximum of ten days. For a major infraction such as carrying a weapon or drugs on school grounds, the student may be referred to an alternative educational setting for up to 45 days. In order for this assignment to take place, however, the student must be provided the "manifestation rule," which would not allow a change in placement if the behavior was a manifestation of the student's disability (Weber, 2006).

Using positive behavior interventions and support with students with disabilities.

Horner, Carr, Strain, Todd, and Reed (2002) completed research involving students who were 8 and younger who had been diagnosed with autism. They found that interventions that had been used to help reduce problem behaviors in these children included change of environmental stimuli, instruction, extinction, reinforcement, punishment, pharmacology, and systems change.

They also note that often these interventions were combined in some way. These interventions were put in place to address behaviors including tantrums, aggression, stereotypy, and self-injury. Their findings were that "Behavioral interventions, particularly positive behavioral interventions, are effective in reducing problem behaviors by 80% to 90%." Furthermore:

> Problem behaviors are prevented when aversive events are minimized and children are given access to rewarding activities and outcomes. When environments promote the child's engagement, give access to preferred activities, include consistent scheduling, provide access to typical peers, and include effective communication systems, problem behaviors are prevented. (p. 2)

Bopp, Brown, and Mirenda, (2004) completed a similar study focused on children with autism and other severe developmental disabilities who had problem behavior and engage in argumentative and alternative communication. The researchers concluded that when appropriate interventions were applied, in all their examined students "either an immediate or gradual substantial reduction in problem behavior was reported" (p. 13). Furthermore, "Regardless of the age of participants, settings, schedule formats, symbol sets, or problem behaviors, all of the studies listed…reported positive outcomes; in addition, across the majority of studies, behavior improvements were shown to be both rapid and substantial" (p. 14).

DuPaul and Eckert (1997) completed a meta-analysis examining positive behavior interventions applied to students diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. The study reviewed three different interventions including contingency management, which provides positive reinforcement for desired behaviors and punishment for unwanted behaviors, cognitive behavioral, which helps the student develop self-control skills and reflective practices so students can monitor their own behavior, and academic interventions, which focus on how information is taught and materials used. The analysis found that students "showed clear improvements in classroom behavior after participating in any one of the 3 types of interventions" (p. 7).

School-wide positive behavior interventions and supports.

With all of the success demonstrated through using PBIS with students with disabilities, soon the system began to be used school–wide for all students (Colvin, Sugai, Good, & Lee, 1997; Colvin, Kame'enui, & Sugai, 1993; Luis, Colvin, & Sugai, 2000; Lewis, Sugai & Colvin, 1998; Taylor-Green, et al., 1997; Todd, Horner, Sugai & Sprague, 1999). Landers, Courtade, and Ryndak (2012) explain

> The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act mandate to use PBIS strategies led to the evolution of PBIS into a school-wide approach (SWPBIS) used extensively across the country (Sugai et al., 2000). Over the past decade, school districts have begun to use this school-wide approach to address common challenging behaviors of students in their schools. As reported on their Web site, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Technical Assistance Center on Effective School-Wide Interventions reports that SW-PBIS strategies are currently being implemented in 9,000 schools. (p. 1)

Since the previous mentioned publication, PBIS.org now reports that 18,277 schools have implemented SWPBIS (PBIS, 2013). The fact that the number of schools implementing SWPBIS has doubled in one year demonstrates the popularity and the rapid growth of the system. SWPBIS may be defined with slight differences between researchers, but Clonan, McDougal, Clark, and Davison (2007) provide a good concise explanation by writing "SWPBS focuses on changing the environment to better meet the needs of all students through a comprehensive and proactive approach in which faculty and staff actively teach and acknowledge expected behavior" (p. 19). Sugai & Horner (2006) go on to say that "SWPBS emphasizes the application of evidence-based behavioral technologies in the larger context of the classroom, school, and district, and is guided by three main tenets: prevention, theoretically sound and evidence-based practice, and systems implementation" (p. 246).

Safran and Oswald (2003) explain, "The first step of the PBS process is typically for collaborative teams to identify intervention priorities" (p. 363). This is usually done by an examination of current ODR data that the school should already have on file. Sugai et al. (2000) explain

> An office discipline referral represents an event in which (a) a student engaged in a behavior that violated a rule or social norm in the school, (b) the problem behavior was observed or identified by a member of the school staff, and (c) the event resulted in a consequence delivered by administrative staff who produced a permanent (written) product defining the whole event. (p. 96)

When evaluating the ODRs, several different areas need to be considered. Though Clonan et al. (2007) and Sugai et al. (2000) have slightly different ideas on the exact data to examine, they agree that the school data team should examine the total number of ODRs for the year, the number of referrals by student, the number of referrals by location, and the number of referrals across a particular time span such as monthly or quarterly. Researchers agree that the teams should look for trends in the data to determine where they need to focus their intervention efforts (Clonan et al., 2007; Sugai et al., 2000; Safran & Oswald 2003). Safran and Oswald (2003) explain, "For example, if a small number of pupils receive the vast majority of the office referrals, then the team may choose to develop intensive individualized interventions" (p. 363).

Conclusion.

The American public school system is faced with many challenges. However, appropriately managing school discipline is near the top of list of challenges that many schools face (Nelson, 1996; Rose & Gallup, 1998; Walker et al., 2004). The idea of discipline can mean many things to many different people. While some consider discipline to be harsh and fear inducing, others see discipline as an opportunity to teach acceptable behavior (Onderi and Odera, 2012; Were, 2006). When used to teach acceptable social behavior, discipline can lead to a student attaining more success in school and ultimately more success in life.

Throughout the twentieth century, as schools began to move away from physical punishment to exclusionary discipline, many additional problems were created (Skiba et al., 2010). Administrators are required by law to allow students their due process in explaining their account of the incident (Shah & McNeil, 2013). However, often, once this process is completed, administrators often use exclusionary discipline as the consequence for the infraction (Cohen, 2012). This exclusionary discipline provides little opportunity for teaching students acceptable behavior and usually places the student right back in the same setting after the time of the consequence has been served. When OSS or expulsion is assigned, often children are at home alone unsupervised during the school day, which can lead to additional delinquency (Dupper et al., 2009; Gregory, 2012).

The idea of zero-tolerance has led to students being punished excessively for minor behavior infractions (Fowler, 2011; Pfleger & Wiley, 2012). As zero-tolerance polices began to appear in the late 1980's, the federal government passed the Gun-Free Schools Act in 1993, which expelled any student bringing a gun to school for one calendar year (Meek, 2009). The passing of this act seemed to justify zero-tolerance policies that were already in place in several states and then allowed other states to create their own zero-tolerance policies. These policies were welcomed by the American public and therefore backed by legislators at the time due to the growing perception that schools were unsafe. However, these new policies often led to harsh punishments for minor violations. Researchers have documented that as students are suspended, expelled, or criminalized for their behavior, they experience a "push out" effect in which schools are causing their own drop outs (Wald & Losen, 2003).

The students who are most affected by these inappropriate discipline practices tend to be males, African Americans, Hispanics, American Indians, and students with disabilities. As pre-

viously discussed, most of the disproportionality research focuses on race. African American, Hispanic, and American Indian students are far more likely to receive ODRs and exclusionary discipline than their white or Asian peers (Pfleger & Wiley, 2012; Skiba et al., 2002; Vincent et al., 2012; Wallace et al., 2008). It is also argued that although socioeconomic status may play a part in this disproportionality, race is a more accurate predictor of involvement in the discipline process (Bryan et al., 2012).

It is clear from the previously referenced literature that the system for discipline in the American public school is in need of change. The unsuccessful ideas, including exclusionary discipline, discretionary discipline, and criminalizing students, which have led to "push out," the "school-to-prison pipeline," and overwhelming disproportionality, must continue to be investigated and corrected through solid research. Educators are charged with a powerful profession that can have an enormous impact on the students that they serve. Although there are many concerns with the discipline systems in American public schools, all educators must recognize these inappropriate discipline practices and disproportionate discipline numbers; they should not continue to punish impeding behavior but rather make every attempt to teach socially appropriate behavior (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012).

Many schools are turning to the idea of SWPBIS to help correct these areas that need to be addressed (PBIS, 2013). PBIS was introduced as law for students with disabilities in 1997 through the IDEA Act (Sugai et al., 2000). The success of PBIS with students with disabilities quickly led educators to examine ways of implementing the idea school-wide (Landers et al., 2012). SWPBIS has since shown positive effects across schools, districts, and states (Calderella et al., 2011; Lassen et al., 2006; Luiselli et al., 2005; Miramontes et al., 2011; Muscott et al., 2004; Muscott et al., 2008; Pas & Bradshaw, 2012; Sadler & Sugai, 2009; Sherrod et al., 2009;

Sprague et al., 2001; Warren et al., 2003). Many researchers have evaluated the system across different school levels and in many different settings. The research is clear that SWPBIS can improve student behavior.

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2 SCHOOL-WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS: MEASURING IMPLEMENTATION FIDELITY AND EXAMINING IMPLEMENTATION IMPACT

The major focus of this study was to determine to what degree the implementation of *School-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports* (SWPBIS) impacts *Office Discipline Referrals* (ODRs) and *Student Expulsions* in one middle school located in the Southeastern United States. The study also measured the level of fidelity that the school experienced in implementing the SWPBIS system. There was a brief examination of teachers' perception of the system's impact on classroom management plans and other possible impacts that the system may have had within the school. The following research questions guided the study.

1. What impact has SWPBIS implementation had on Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs)?

2. What impact has SWPBIS implementation had on Student Expulsions?

3. What is the level of fidelity to which the identified school has implemented SWPBIS?

4. What impact has SWPBIS implementation had on teachers' classroom management plans?

5. What other impact(s) is the system having on the school?

Methodology

This case study examined a rural middle school in the Southeastern United States that opened in 2004. The administration of the school was displeased with the number of students who were receiving Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) and missing class time for disciplinary issues. Therefore, the administration of the school decided to implement a School-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports system in an effort to reduce the number of ODRs that students were receiving. The study included (a) a review of documents relating to school safety and

discipline, (b) an observation of the school, and (c) interviews of staff and students. The review of the documents, the observation, and the interviews, and additional data collection all took place in October 2014. Student interviews took place before the school day started. The interview of staff members, including the assistant principal for discipline and the teachers, took place after the work day was complete. The *School Wide Evaluation Tool* (SET) was the primary evaluation instrument; however, structured interview questions, that were *not* included in the SET, were also used. Moreover, to provide a broader background, historical data was presented from 2008-2014. The study took place during the school's third year of SWPBIS implementation. In summary, this case study presents an assessment of a School-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Support system by examining (a) the number of student office referrals and expulsions, (b) teacher's classroom management plans, and (c) teachers' perceptions of SWPBIS implementation.

The word discipline can have different meanings according to the person or context in which it is being used or examined. According to Onderi and Odera (2012), teachers who struggle with classroom management see discipline as a negative word involving punishment, pain, or fear. In the same paper, the authors provide an additional definition: according to Were (2006), "the word discipline means a system of guiding the individuals to make responsible decisions responsibly" (p. 710). It seems as though a highly functioning classroom or school would consist of teachers and administrators whose thoughts on discipline more clearly align with Were's definition. *For the purpose of this study, school discipline will relate to the manner in which the staff addresses inappropriate student behavior.*

The idea of using a system of School-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports has gained much attention (Sugai & Horner, 2002). These efforts aimed to provide evidence that

reducing inappropriate behavior could be effectively accomplished by focusing on research based practices, providing appropriate interventions, and collecting and analyzing data. In order for the system to be effective, it should have individual plans for identified students but also should have "as a primary goal, the implementation of prevention practices that target the entire school population" (Luiselli et al., 2005, p. 184). PBIS.org reports that 18,277 schools have implemented SWPBIS (PBIS, 2013). This number has more than doubled since 2012 demonstrating the system's huge rise in popularity (Landers, Courtade, & Ryndak, 2012).

SWPBIS may be defined with slight differences between researchers, but Clonan, McDougal, Clark, and Davison (2007) provide a concise explanation by writing "SWPBS focuses on changing the environment to better meet the needs of all students through a comprehensive and proactive approach in which faculty and staff actively teach and acknowledge expected behavior" (p. 19). Sugai & Horner (2006) go on to say, "SWPBS emphasizes the application of evidence-based behavioral technologies in the larger context of the classroom, school, and district, and is guided by three main tenets: prevention, theoretically sound and evidence-based practice, and systems implementation" (p. 246). The idea is to focus on teaching of expectations at the beginning of a school year and reinforcing those expectations as the year progresses. The school or school district must carefully plan expectations, how to teach expectations, and how to respond when expectations are not met before implementing the SWPBIS system.

School-wide Evaluation Tool.

Once a school has implemented a SWPBIS system, the school may need to evaluate implementation fidelity. The School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET) was created for this purpose and it is the most common measure of SWPBIS implementation fidelity (Pas & Bradshaw, 2012). The SET includes interviews with administrators, teachers, PBIS team members, and students, as

well as observations throughout the school, and a review of documents such as the school im-
provement plan, SWPBIS plan, and the ODR form. The tool provides points to the school ac-
cording to the level that each component has been implemented across seven areas, including
defined expectations, behavioral expectations taught, on-going system for rewarding positive be-
havior, system for responding to behavioral violations, monitoring and decision making, man-
agement, and district level support. The more points a school receives, the better the implementa-
tion has been. The instrument may be used as a pre and post-test or across multiple years to de-
termine if a school is making progress. Horner, Todd, Lewis-Palmer, Irwin, Sugai, and Boland
(2004) completed research on the SET to examine the instrument itself for validity and reliability
and found:

> SET meets and exceeds basic psychometric criteria for measurement tools used in re-
> search. It can be administered with high interobserver agreement, demonstrates excellent
> test-retest reliability (even when both observers /data sources vary across Times 1 and 2),
> produces a valid index of school-wide PBS as defined by Lewis and Sugai (1999), and is
> sensitive enough to be useful in documenting change in levels of implementation of
> school-wide PBS procedures (Sugai et al., 2004, p. 10).

Additional researchers have also conducted studies on the SET and agree that SET is both valid
and reliable (Bradshaw, Reinke, Brown, Bevans, & Leaf, 2008; Vincent, Spaulding, Tobin,
2010).

Using the School-wide Evaluation Tool.

I used the School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET) as the foundation and primary component
of this study. Sugai, Lewis-Palmer, Todd, and Horner (2001) provide clear directions on how the
SET should be used. First, this researcher observed posted school rules and crisis plans in multi-
ple school settings. Next, I completed a review of school improvement goals, the annual
SWPBIS plan, and the ODR form. Then I moved into the interview component of the instrument.
Dr. George Sugai, co-creator of the SET, agreed to allow me to use the instrument which is

available for download at www.PBIS.org. However, he did stipulate that the tool had to be used as is and that no components could be changed. However, I also wanted to know additional information from teachers about the SWPBIS implementation. Therefore, after asking the initial questions from the SET, I asked follow up questions in an attempt to understand teacher perceptions of how SWPBIS implementation has impacted their classroom management plans and the school climate. They were also asked if there were aspects of the SWPBIS system that may need improving and if they had ideas on how to implement the improvements on the identified areas of need. Their responses were documented in an effort to identify commonalities to report as qualitative findings. As mentioned earlier, there was also a comparison of ODRs and expulsion data that is included in the findings section. This information could be analyzed in a longitudinal manner for future studies.

Case Study methodology.

A single explanatory case study methodology was used for this analysis. Merriam (1998) explains the importance of establishing boundaries for the case study in order to establish and maintain focus. This case had boundaries as it examined the SWPBIS implementation and system at only the target school over the three-year period from 2012-2014. The case was also bound by the number of participants, by the SET used for measuring implementation fidelity, and by the number of follow up questions. Also, as Merriam suggests, I have chosen this study because it is "intrinsically interesting," and I want to "achieve as full an understanding of the phenomenon as possible" (p. 28). As I presented the study, I used "common language, as opposed to scientific or educational jargon" (Merriam, 1998, p. 39) so that the information would be clear to non-researchers.

Much of the structure that is utilized in the study comes from the ideas of Robert K. Yin (2002) which he presents in the third edition of his book *Case Study Research: Design and Methods.* In the book, he explains "the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events" (p. 2). My purpose was to understand these characteristics and to present the information in a manner that would not only benefit the target school, but also any school or researcher interested in positive behavior support.

Yin (2002) also explains that a case study unlike other research methods should include multiple sources of data (p. 14). This case study included interviews, observations, and a review of important documents including the school improvement plan, the SWPBIS implementation plan, and the ODR template that are related to the SWPBIS implementation and system. This allowed for a triangulation of data sources that provides for a more complete evaluation and more accurate conclusions than an evaluation only using one source of data (Yin, 2002). A chronological structure was also used which provided context of the target school starting in 2012 and ultimately led up to the actual study that was completed two months into the 2014-2015 school year. Furthermore, participants were allowed to review my report in draft form when the study was completed. This provided the participants with a chance to submit feedback on the study for clarification and enhancement of the findings presented. Only two participants provided feedback and they both felt that the information presented was accurate and no changes were necessary. Yin (2002) explains that this member checking process enhances the accuracy of the study and increases construct validity (p. 99).

The case study involved an epistemology of social constructivism due to the fact that I did not expect to find the answer, instead I investigated the experiences of those involved with SWPBIS. Additionally, this researcher was involved in the research, the SWPBIS system, and

efforts to improve the system. Derry (1999) and McMahon (1997) explain, "social constructiv-ism emphasizes the importance of culture and context in understanding what occurs in society and constructing knowledge based on this understanding" (as cited in Kim, 2001, p. 2). The cul-ture and context of the target school are clearly explained later in this manuscript. Kim (2001) explains that social constructivists believe that reality is constructed through social groups and interactions. This study provided an understanding of the reality of SWPBIS implementation within the target school, by examining the creation of the system designed by staff members. Kim also discusses that social constructivists believe that knowledge is created through social interactions in a specific environment. The knowledge that is constructed in this study was gen-erated by this researcher's social interactions with the staff and the documents created by the staff. This knowledge was then presented to the staff in a large group setting in an effort to aid in continued improvement of the SWPBIS system. This constructivist approach was used *not* in an attempt to judge the SWPBIS implementation, or those involved in the process of implementa-tion; but rather, to provide the target school with an accurate reflection of the current reality of the SWPBIS system at the time of the evaluation.

The purpose of the study was to review discipline data, gain knowledge and understand-ing of how the teachers feel about the SWPBIS system, determine if SWPBIS has been imple-mented with fidelity, and to identify areas where the system may improve. The study also pro-vided proposed methods of improvement from the teachers. The theoretical perspective is of an evaluative nature, as I gained an understanding of people's experience in working with the SWPBIS program. As Lapan and DeMarrais (2004) advocate, I approached teachers with a pur-pose of understanding their points of view, and the case study method of inquiry allowed me to gain an undistorted account of their experiences.

Though Merriam (1998) explains, "a case study does not claim any particular methods for data collection or data analysis" (p. 28) and Yin (2003) explicates "the case study report does not follow any stereotypic form" (p. 141), my methods and reporting were very clear. The major instrument that is used for the study is the SET, which is designed to assess (a) features of SWPBIS that are in place, (b) help determine annual goals for school-wide effective behavior support, (c) evaluate on-going efforts toward school-wide behavior support, (d) create and revise procedures as needed, and (e) compare efforts toward school-wide effective behavior support from year to year. The results of the study showed where the school stood based on the instrument utilized and provide areas to target for improvement. However, in addition to helping the case study school, this work may also have a district-wide impact as the system decides on next steps. Currently, the district has allowed all schools to choose if they would like to participate in the SWPBIS pilot, rather than making it a requirement. However, these results could help local leaders in making appropriate district-wide decisions for the future. Finally, the study may be significant regionally. In a thorough examination of research, I have not come across a similar study completed in the Southeastern United States.

The case study methodology provided a comprehensive examination of the implementation of SWPBIS system in the chosen school. The results are valuable to the school as they continue to improve the system from year to year. Though this evaluation focused on teacher perception of the implementation, identifying methods of improvement, and a comparison of office discipline referrals and expulsions, it may ultimately help improve the quality of life for the students and teachers in the school. Any school seeking to improve student behavior management could replicate this study.

Culture and context.

This case study examined a rural middle school in the Southeastern United States that opened in 2004. Historical data was reviewed relating to the target school demographics and discipline records from 2008-2014. At the time of the study, the school enrolment was 800 students. The total number of students had remained relatively consistent over the previous several years (Table 1). The school serves 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students, and also serves students who are Severely Intellectually Developed (SID), Profound Intellectually Developed (PID), as well as Moderate Intellectually Developed (MOID).

Table 1:

Total School Enrolment in the Target School

School year	Number of students on the tenth day of school
2009-2010	839
2010-2011	794
2011-2012	811
2012-2013	789
2013-2014	759
2014-2015	800

The ethnicity of the student body includes 42% African American, 40 % Caucasian, 8% Hispanic/Latino, 5% Asian, and 5% Multi-Racial students.

The population of males is 52%, while the population of females is 48%. The population includes 12% of students receiving special education services, 19% of students receiving gifted services, and 3% of students receiving English as a second language services. On the day of initial data collection, the attendance rate was 94%. The school also has a free and reduced lunch

rate of 60% and receives full Title I funding. The school is in a small rural community and many students are brought by bus from a larger neighboring community.

The school houses 93 staff members. All teachers and paraprofessionals are Highly Qualified, according to the state department of education. Teachers on the staff have been involved in education for an average of fifteen years and at their current position in the school for seven years. Of the 55 teachers on staff, 22 hold masters degrees, 14 hold specialists degrees, and two hold doctorate degrees. Two of the teachers also hold National Board Certification, and one has been named a Master Teacher.

At the time of the study, the administration consisted of one principal and two assistant principals. The principal was entering his third year at the school. One of the first changes the new principal made was switching the roles of the assistant principals. My colleague was put in charge of discipline, and I was put in charge of instruction. This change was made in an effort to improve student performance on standardized tests. I was excited about the change to the new position because I felt that the duties and responsibilities of this position more appropriately aligned to my strengths as an instructional leader. However, I continued to maintain an interest in behavior management. I also felt that the move from practitioner of discipline on a daily basis to more of an observer of the process was beneficial in my evaluation of the system because it helped remove potential bias from the results of the implementation.

A major problem that the target school faced was that it had a large amount of office discipline referrals (ODRs). Table 2, below shows the number of ODRs that district schools reported during the 2008-2009 school year prior to my hiring as assistant principal. School "H" represents the target school. The target school had the most ODRs in the district and the second highest number of ODRs per student.

Table 2:

Number of Office Discipline Referrals by School

Schools 2008-2009	Number of ODRs	Number of students per school	Number of ODRs per student
School A	691	712	.97
School B	722	854	.85
School C	730	626	1.17
School D	812	759	1.07
School E	869	747	1.16
School F	891	652	1.37
School G	1065	630	1.69
School H (target school)	1169	836	1.40

Therefore, upon my hiring, I made reducing ODRs my top priority. Over the next three years, I worked diligently in an attempt to reduce this number of referrals. I created new policies, assigned consequences for violation of school behavior policies, worked many additional hours, read professional literature, and guided professional learning in an effort to reduce these numbers. However, the result of these efforts was not a reduction in referrals but rather a drastic increase. In my first year on the job, during the 2009-2010 school year, the number of ODRs grew by more than 450; and in my second year, during the 2010-2011 school year, the number grew by 250 more. These increasing numbers of ODRs are represented in Table 3, below. Sadly, I was not able to realize my goal of reducing the number of referrals during my three year assignment as the assistant principal for discipline. Any time a teacher sent a student to the office, I took on the attitude that the teacher was no longer able to control the student's behavior and that he or she needed my assistance. I regularly assigned exclusionary discipline such as in school and out

of school suspensions as consequences to students who received ODRs causing students to miss valuable classroom instructional time.

Table 3:

Number of ODRs per School Year from School "H"

School year	Number of ODRs
2008-2009 (baseline)	1169
2009-2010	1611
2010-2011	1866
2011-2012	1398

In addition to the high number of referrals, the school was also the lowest performing school academically as measured by the Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT). This test measures achievement by school across five subjects and three grade levels in the middle school setting. Of these measured fifteen areas, the target school had the lowest scores of the school system in thirteen of the fifteen areas. I felt that there was a correlation between the high number of referrals and the low student achievement and research supports this idea (Luiselli, Putnam, Handler, & Feinberg, 2005; Lassen, Steele, & Sailor, 2006; Muscot, Mann, & LeBrun, 2008). The exclusionary discipline that was being assigned was not improving student achievement or reducing the number of office referrals.

Once the new principal took over the job as the building leader, he encouraged the staff to embrace new initiatives that might improve student achievement. Around the same time of the new principal's appointment, the district's central office administrators asked the principals of all the schools in the system if they would be interested in training and piloting a SWPBIS system. The new principal agreed that our school would like to be involved in that opportunity. I was es-

pecially interested in this topic due to my personal experience in dealing with behavior management in a middle school setting.

The process of implementing SWPBIS began in June of 2012 soon after the other assistant principal and I switched roles. This was her first major initiative as the assistant principal for discipline. Each of the schools from the district that chose to participate in the pilot sent a team of administrators and teacher leaders to a training session that was held at the district's central office. For two full days, the schools' teams participated in training and implementation of SWPBIS within a school. After gaining an understanding of the purpose of SWPBIS in a large group setting, individual schools worked together as teams to review their school discipline data for the previous three school years. We looked at the numbers of ODRs, when they were occurring, and which behaviors were occurring most frequently. Upon gaining a better understanding of the school's discipline data, we then turned our focus to more effective methods of teaching expectations in an attempt to reduce the number of ODRs. We created four basic rules that we would use to aid in teaching expectations: Respect, Organization, Attitude, and Responsibility (ROAR). We then discussed examples of what it meant to practice these ROAR principals in multiple settings across the school including the classrooms, restrooms, hallways, and the lunchroom. The committee decided that these examples would be made into posters and placed in the appropriate locations around the school in an effort to reinforce school rules and to use as reference materials for teachers. We discussed methods of recognizing students who were meeting expectations with some sort of positive reinforcements. Finally, we decided to create a SWPBIS team that would work together to review data and discuss possible improvements to the SWPBIS system.

The school implemented a system of SWPBIS during the 2012-2013 school year. The teachers were introduced to the ideas and the system during pre-planning time before the students returned to school. The team of administrators and teacher leaders who attended the summer training decided that all students would be taught and shown examples of the newly created school expectations (ROAR) during the first week of school. They also decided that students who were not successful with the initial and ongoing training and who were in need of additional support would be identified as Tier two students and would receive an appropriate intervention. These students would also have behavior goals and their progress would be monitored in an effort to determine if the intervention was successful. The school attempted to incorporate individual plans for identified students, as well as practices that would benefit the entire school. The school implemented SWPBIS in hopes that this system would help in reducing the number of office discipline referrals and expulsions. The SWPBIS implementation included many ideas that had not been used previously at the school on a school-wide level. The SWPBIS system had been in place for two full school years at the time of the study. Changes had been made by the SWPBIS team over those two school years and the school was beginning their third year of implementation at the time of this study.

Once the school implemented SWPBIS, the question from the staff was whether or not the system was working in decreasing ODRs and expulsions, as the administration hoped that it would. The administrators of the school were also concerned with the fidelity of implementation. In addition, the administrators wanted to know if teachers believed that there were ways the system could improve and if there were any other possible impacts the implementation of SWPBIS had on the school. This study answers these questions and concerns.

Results

The first data that were collected consisted of the number of ODRs and expulsions that had occurred at the school over the past six school years. The number of ODRs was collected by pulling reports from AS400 and Infinite Campus software that is used by the district for record keeping purposes. The number of expulsions was collected by reviewing records with the assistant principal for discipline. Students were expelled from school for many reasons, which included breaking a drug or weapon zero-tolerance policy, receiving a felonious charge in the community, or for receiving multiple referrals to the office for inappropriate behavior. In order for the student to be expelled, an administrator at the school must make a recommendation during a meeting to either a student review committee, which is held at the school, or to a tribunal committee, which is held at the central office.

If a student with disabilities exhibited behavior that required one of these meetings, a manifestation determination review committee was required by law to meet first to determine if the behavior was due to the disability or the school's lack of services in relation to the disability. Folders containing student information and notes from student review committee meetings and tribunals are stored in a closet in the school for five years before the records are sent to the central office. Each student who has had a student review committee meeting or tribunal and ultimately was expelled from school has one of these folders. The results from these queries and review of records are listed in table 4 below.

Table 4:

Number of ODRs and Expulsions per School Year for the Target School

School Year	ODRs	Expulsions
2008-2009	1169	39
2009-2010	1611	48
2010-2011	1866	60
2011-2012	1398	40
2012-2013 (SWPBIS Implementation Year 1)	817	38
2013-2014 (SWPBIS Implementation Year 2)	713	27

The next information collected was the SET data. This information was collected two months into the school year as suggested by the instrument creators. The SET included interviews with an administrator, teachers, PBIS team members, and students, as well as observations throughout the school, and a review of documents including the school improvement plan, SWPBIS plan, and the ODR form.

The review of documents and school observation was completed on October 16, 2014, at the end of the school day. The review of documents was completed with the assistant principal for discipline and included an examination of the school improvement plan, the SWPBIS plan, and the ODR template. The documents provided evidence that justified the responses that the assistant principal later provided in an interview relating to SWPBIS implementation. The observation of the school was completed by this researcher alone. I walked around the building to see if the school behavior expectations had been posted in the office, classrooms, the cafeteria, the media center, the gym, and in hallways. I also checked these areas to see if a documented crisis plan was readily available. The purpose of the observation was to examine evidence that would suggest that a school crisis plan and SWPBIS expectations were clearly in place.

Each adult who participated in this study was asked to complete an Informed Consent Document. To begin the interviews, the school administrator who is responsible for SWPBIS implementation was asked twenty-one pre-written questions. Since there is only one assistant principal in the school who is in charge of discipline, this person was not randomly selected, and I invited her face-to-face to participate in the study. The tool, which contains seven pre-written questions, then calls for interviews of ten randomly selected staff. Teachers were randomly selected using Microsoft Excel. This was done by listing all teachers on the staff in the first column of a spreadsheet. A random value was then generated in the second column. Next, a random sort was completed under the data tab. The 10 staff member names listed at the top of the random sample were selected for the study. I then approached selected staff members face-to-face and personally invited him or her to participate in the study. The study did not use any flyers, emails, advertisements, screen shots from websites, or any other recruitment material. All ten of the teachers who were randomly selected agreed to participate in the study.

Next, the SET called for interviewing five randomly selected members of the SWPBIS team with three pre-written questions. This team consisted of selected teachers from the staff who created plans for the school, reviewed data, and made suggestions on how the system may improve. Finally, the interview section of the tool required interviewing fifteen randomly selected students. These students also completed an assent form, and his or her parent or guardian submitted a written consent as well. Once the fifteen students were in place, they were each asked two pre-written questions. SWPBIS team members and students were also randomly selected using Excel and then invited to participate face-to-face. Again, all SWPBIS team members and students who were randomly selected agreed to participate. I believe that all participants that were randomly selected agreed to participate because they were excited to provide their input on

SWPBIS. I also believe that most of the participants like me and felt that they were doing me a favor by agreeing to take part in the study.

The assistant principal for discipline and the staff members were interviewed at the end of his or her work day. The interview with the assistant principal lasted about twenty minutes while the staff member interviews ranged between five and ten minutes. All interviews took place in my office in October 2014 and all of the questions were pre-written. Student interviews were also conducted in my office and consisted of pre-written interview questions. However, those interviews took place before the start of the school day and only lasted two minutes.

According to the review of documents, observation of the school, and combined responses of all of the interviews, a percentage was created for each of the seven areas and an overall score was calculated. The final score is on a 100 point scale and would ideally be administered annually to measure progress. However, due to time restraints, only a baseline measure was obtained in this study.

The SET contains seven categories including defined expectations, behavioral expectations taught, on-going system for rewarding positive behavior, system for responding to behavioral violations, monitoring and decision making, management, and district level support. Each of the categories contains between two and eight items. The SET scoring guide provides evaluation questions to guide the researcher in scoring each item as 0- not in place, 1- partially in place, or 2- fully in place. The guide is very clear and the researcher is easily able to assign the appropriate numbers after the observation, review of documents, and interviews are completed. The total number of points earned in each category was then divided by the total number of possible points to gain a percentage for each category. Then the percentage for each category was added and divided by seven to gain the overall average. Horner et al. (2004) explain that a school has

successfully implemented SWPBIS with fidelity when it has reached an 80% or better in the Behavioral Expectations Taught category and an 80% or better overall score. Ideally, the SET would be administered from year to year in an attempt to compare percentages. A higher percentage reflects a higher level of implementation fidelity. However, due to time constraints, only baseline data is presented in this study. A summary of SET data for the 2014-2015 school year by category and overall is included in Table 5:

Table 5:

Overall Results from the SET

SET Category	Percentage
Expectations Defined	100%
Behavioral Expectations Taught	90%
Acknowledgement	100%
System for Responding	100%
Monitoring Decision Making	100%
Management	81%
District-Level Support	100%
Overall Average	95%

The final data collected consisted of responses to questions created by this researcher. These questions were asked of the same randomly selected teachers discussed earlier in this section after the questions provided by the SET had been asked. All questions were asked in the same sequence to the participants. The first question asked if the SWPBIS implementation had any impact on the teacher's classroom management plans. Three teachers stated that implementation had no impact on the management plan, while seven stated that it had a positive impact on their plan. It is clear from the additional comments that the teachers believe that SWPBIS im-

plementation was beneficial in improving their classroom management plans. Responses and additional comments are listed in Table 6 below.

Table 6:

Teacher Responses to Classroom Management Plan Question

Teacher	Has the implementation of SWPBIS had any impact on your classroom management plan?		Additional Comments
	Yes	No	
Teacher A		X	
Teacher B	X		SWPBIS implementation heightened my awareness of students who were doing the right thing.
Teacher C		X	
Teacher D	X		It helps in effectively managing time in the classroom.
Teacher E	X		It helps provide clearer expectations.
Teacher F	X		It has improved my class structure.
Teacher G		X	
Teacher H	X		It has promoted organization.
Teacher I	X		It has created buy-in from the students.
Teacher J	X		

The second question asked if the teachers felt that SWPBIS implementation had any impact on the school's climate. Eight teachers stated that they felt that implementation had a positive impact on the school climate, one said it had a negative impact, and one teacher was unsure. Some teachers added additional comments that are included in Table 7. The comments provided imply that the perception of positive change in the school climate was due mostly to students demonstrating more positive behavior. However, there were also comments that suggest more work needed to be done with the SWPBIS system.

Table 7:

Teacher Responses to School Climate Question

Teacher	Do you feel that SWPBIS implementation has had an impact on our school climate?		Additional Comments
	Yes	No	
Teacher A	X		It has helped students behave.
Teacher B	X		The kids like being recognized.
Teacher C	X		It is motivating for some.
Teacher D	X		It is still a work in progress.
Teacher E	X		
Teacher F	X		It has cut down on traffic to the office.
Teacher G	N/A	N/A	
Teacher H	X		Structure always helps.
Teacher I	X		
Teacher J		X	We have not done enough on the positive side.

The third question asked if there had been any other impacts on the school resulting from SWPBIS implementation (see Table 8). I asked this question in an attempt to see if there were aspects of SWPBIS implementation that I had not considered. I felt that there may be some components that could be seen differently from a teacher's perspective as the practitioner rather than the administrator who was a co-creator of the system. However, I did not receive the feedback I was attempting to obtain. Six of the teachers either shrugged their shoulders, looked at me confused, or stated they "could not think of anything" when asked if SWPBIS had other impacts on the school. Two teachers made comments that students were motivated to meet behavior expectations through SWPBIS, one stated that implementation had been a learning process, and one stated that implementation had resulted in additional work for teachers.

Table 8:

Teacher Responses to School Climate Question

Teacher	Do you think the implementation of SWPBIS has had any other impacts on the school either positive or negative?		Additional Comments
	Yes	No	
Teacher A	N/A	N/A	
Teacher B	N/A	N/A	
Teacher C	X		It is motivating for some but it is not important to all kids.
Teacher D	N/A	N/A	
Teacher E	X		It is a learning process.
Teacher F	N/A	N/A	
Teacher G	N/A	N/A	
Teacher H	N/A	N/A	
Teacher I	X		If students see that there is something to get out of doing the right thing they will adhere to it and try to do it more often.
Teacher J	X		It can be frustrating to teachers because it is extra work.

The final question asked if there were aspects of the SWPBIS plan that needed improving and if the teacher had ideas for the improvement. Table 9 clearly shows that all participants felt that there were aspects of the plan that needed improving. Some of the responses were very useful and could be used as recommendations for improving the system such as the idea of creating nicer signs and individual recognition for appropriate behavior. Other comments were general or did not provide specific examples such as "some don't care" or "we need to streamline." These comments are not very useful in aiding improvement. Finally, some responses did not even seem to relate to the SWPBIS system such as "the dress code is not clear." This may suggest that all teachers may still not have a clear understanding of the SWPBIS system and the system's purpose.

Table 9:

Teacher Responses to Improvement Question

Teacher	Do you feel that there are aspects of our SWPBIS plan that need improving? If so, do you have ideas on improving these areas of need?		Additional Comments
	Yes	No	
Teacher A	X		The dress code is not clear.
Teacher B	X		We need individual recognition.
Teacher C	X		Some don't care.
Teacher D	X		We need to streamline.
Teacher E	X		There needs to be clarity between all stake-holders.
Teacher F	X		There needs to be an easier way to document good and bad behavior.
Teacher G	X		Bigger and nicer signs listing expectations should be created.
Teacher H	X		Teachers need to re-visit the expectations throughout the year.
Teacher I	X		There needs to be a structure for rewards.
Teacher J	X		Buy-in is the overall key.

The purpose of this study was to examine the SWPBIS implementation impact on ODRs and expulsions, determine the level of implementation fidelity, investigate possible implementation impact on teachers' classroom management plans, and determine any other impact that the SWPBIS implementation may have had on the school. Table 6 clearly shows a drastic reduction in ODRs and a reduction in expulsions during the first two years of SWPBIS implementation. However, in an effort to examine SWPBIS implementation as the exact cause of these reductions, there needed to be a clear picture that SWPBIS had been implemented with fidelity. Horner et al. (2004) explain that a school has successfully implemented SWPBIS with fidelity when it has reached an 80% or better in the Behavioral Expectations Taught category and an 80% or better overall score. Table 7 reflects that the target school scored 90% in the Behavioral Expectations Taught category and a 95% overall score. The target school meets both expectations presented by Horner et al. (2004). Therefore, this research suggests that the reduction in ODRs and

expulsions is clearly due to the creation of a SWPBIS system that has been implemented with fidelity.

The review of documents completed with the assistant principal for discipline clearly revealed that the staff had completed significant work to ensure that implementation was successful. The school improvement plan suggested that SWPBIS was one of three major school improvement goals for the school year. The school also had documented donations of money and rewards that had been provided from the community to serve as incentives for students demonstrating positive behavior. The SWPBIS plan for implementation contained dates for discussing SWPBIS data with staff, SWPBIS team meeting dates, and dates for recognition of students in groups. The ODR template also included essential information for appropriately documenting and examining referral data such as sex, race, type of infraction, time of day, and results of the referral.

The observation of the school also yielded positive results. The expectations (ROAR) were made into posters and were hanging around the building. The expectations were posted in the office, classrooms, cafeteria, gym, and hallways as outlined in the SET document. The only area where expectations were not posted as suggested was the media center. The school crisis plan was also readily available in the office, classrooms, cafeteria, library, and gym. The pieces of evidence suggest that expectations are clear for staff and students throughout the building.

Finally, the interview component of the SET also provided positive results. All teachers knew the school expectations and stated that the expectations had been taught to his or her students. Nine out of ten teachers said that they had recognized positive student behavior by providing a "blue card" since the beginning of school. Teacher responses also matched the response of the assistant principal for discipline on which behaviors should be immediately sent to the office

with an ODR. These offenses included fighting, extreme disrespect to faculty, and inappropriate sexual actions. All teacher responses were also aligned with the assistant principal on what to do if a stranger was in the building with a gun. All respondents explained that the school procedure was to go into code red lock down and to await further instruction from an administrator. Finally, eight out of ten teachers understood that the school had a team to address school-wide behavior support systems. The corresponding answers of the assistant principal and staff suggest that SWPBIS has been clearly communicated and that most stake holders have an understanding of the process and purpose for implementation.

The additional questions written by this researcher also provide important information in evaluating teacher perception of SWPBIS implementation. It is clear from the information provided in Table 8 that a majority of the teachers stated that they felt SWPBIS implementation had a positive impact on their classroom management plan. Comments provided by teachers such as "It helps provide clearer expectations," "It helps in effectively managing time in the classroom," and "It has improved my class structure" suggest that SWPBIS implementation has improved the teacher's overall organization. One teacher felt that SWPBIS implementation had helped in recognizing students who were doing the right thing and another mentioned that the system had created "buy-in" from the students. These ideas are important in helping ensure that teachers are providing the best learning opportunities for their students each day.

The teachers also felt that the SWPBIS system had improved the school climate. They felt that student behavior had improved but that more work still needed to be done. Teachers felt that SWPBIS implementation had helped students behave, provided structure, and provided motivation to meet expectations. They felt that students liked being recognized and that fewer students were being sent to the office. This perception of improved school climate is important.

Freiberg (1998) states, "school climate can be a positive influence on the health of the learning environment or a significant barrier to learning" (p. 22). Therefore, if there is an improved school climate as a result of SWPBIS implementation, then it should not only aid in success with student behavior but also in student academic success.

The third question asked if there had been any other impacts throughout the school related to implementation, either positive or negative. Responses were mixed with this question, but the basic take away was that all stake-holders need to continue to strengthen the SWPBIS system. The replies with a negative perception included, "It is not important to all kids," "It is a learning process," and "It can be frustrating to teachers because it is extra work." The lone positive perception was "If students see that there is something to get out of doing the right thing they will adhere to it and try to do it more often." The provided responses to this question could serve as topics of discussion for the SWPBIS team within the school.

The final question revealed that there may still be some teachers who do not see a clear distinction between SWPBIS and discipline. The responses on how to improve the SWPBIS plan included in Table 9 are listed below.

"The dress code is not clear."
"We need individual recognition."
"Some don't care."
"We need to streamline."
"There needs to be clarity between all stake-holders."
"There needs to be an easier way to document good and bad behavior."
"Bigger and nicer signs listing expectations should be created."
"Teachers need to re-visit the expectations throughout the year."
"There needs to be a structure for rewards."
"Buy-in is the overall key."
There were multiple teachers who voiced concern that the process for documenting inappropriate behavior was cumbersome. They seemed to feel that it was sometimes easier to let minor infractions go without being thoroughly addressed and expectations re-taught than to go

through all of the efforts that were required to document the infraction. Having individual recognition for students instead of large group celebrations was also a legitimate concern.

Crotty explains that researchers bring many assumptions to their chosen methodology (Crotty, 1998). I have completed a thorough review of SWPBIS literature, and it clearly shows that the implementation of a SWPBIS system effectively reduces the number of office referrals in schools (Caldarella, Shatzer, Gray, Young, & Young, 2011; Lassen, Steele, & Sailor, 2006; Muscott, Mann, & LeBrun, 2008; Putnam, Handler, Ramirex-Platt, & Luiselli, 2003; Ruiz, Ruiz, Sherman, & Nestor, 2012; Sadler & Sugai, 2009; Sherrod, Getch, & Ziomek-Daigle, 2009; Smith, Bicard, Bicard, & Casey, 2012). I assumed that this would happen at the identified school as well. However, this idea was not discussed with the staff or students in an effort to avoid data impact. I believe that the teachers and students were open and honest during the application of the School-wide Evaluation Tool. I feel that I have been completely objective throughout this study by presenting data accurately and effectively. In doing so, all stake holders are provided with a true understanding of the current level of SWPBIS implementation within the school.

This study may involve possible sources of bias or error. One area that could contain bias is the fact that I work in the school. Again, every effort was made to remain objective to have true data, which is in the best interest of the school and the research. Also, since I am the assistant principal and teachers see me as a "boss" and students see me as "in charge," I could have run the risk of these subjects telling me what they think I wanted to hear or painting an unrealistic picture in an attempt to provide positive results. However, I believe that most of the stakeholders in my school trust me. I believe that when they were told that they could answer questions honestly, that the purpose of the research is to aid in school improvement, and that anything they told me would remain confidential, they provided honest responses. The study could also

involve error due to the fact that I have not been "formally trained" in using the SET. Though I have read multiple journal articles and studies defining the SET, how it works, and what the data tells the researchers in the end, this study was the first time I had ever used the tool. Also, in some of SET administration literature there is discussion of using two independent observers to provide inter-observer agreement. For the purposes of this study, I completed the evaluation on my own, which again could lead to some bias. Ultimately, after working through this study and gaining a better understanding of how the entire process works, I would like to eventually be able to complete the SET evaluation with other schools in the same district and possibly throughout the region.

Conclusions

The data in Table 3 clearly shows a drastic reduction in ODRs and a reduction in expulsions during the first two years of SWPBIS implementation. Though it seems intuitive that the reduction in ODRs and expulsions might be linked to SWPBIS implementation, this case study would not be complete without a discussion of two other possible causes of the reductions. Yin explains "threats to validity-basically constituting another group of rival explanations-should be identified and ruled out" (p. 119). I do not feel that this research would be complete without addressing the two other factors that may have had an impact on the drop in referrals. First, one may consider if the reductions in referrals has anything to do with a different person handling disciplinary issues beginning in 2012. The person who is in charge of discipline should have minimal effect on the number of ODRs. The ODRs are put in by teachers, and since the teachers have remained relatively consistent as well as the number of students, then the administrator should have minimal impact on the number of ODRs. The administrator manages discipline by following policy once a student receives an ODR, and therefore the person assigning the conse-

quences for inappropriate behavior should not affect the number of expulsions either. The second possible explanation for the reductions in ODRs and expulsions could be district-wide policy changes related to cell phones and dress code. In 2012, the local board made the decision that the possession of cell phones should no longer result in an automatic ODR and in school suspension assignment. Rather, the suspension would only be assigned if the phone were being used or caused a disruption during instructional time. The board also decided that students would no longer be required to tuck their shirts in. The policy changes may have helped lessen the number of referrals slightly; however, they would not provide the drastic decrease that is evident because they are infractions that were seldom referred to the office prior to the policy change.

The findings of this study aid in providing the school with areas to target for improvement moving forward. The first recommendation is to set goals for the next school year using the data collected in this case study. The SWPBIS team should then revise procedures as needed within the SWPBIS system in an effort to attain the created goals. The team should make an effort to meet monthly, instead of meeting once during each quarter of the school year. Sugai & Horner (2002) suggest that the school should decide on how to keep record of the SWPBIS components of success and areas targeted for improvement. There should be a team at the school that regularly (weekly or monthly) monitors records, such as student or teacher feedback and ODRs across time and location, in an attempt to continuously review the implementation process. This would aid in better analysis of data and more effective communication of data revelations. The team should also ensure that they gain staff input on ideas, plans, rewards, and expectations as changes are made in an effort to gain staff ownership (Safran & Oswald, 2003). Data and any changes to the implementation plan should consistently be presented to the staff and students. The most important recommendation is that the school should continue to complete annual eval-

uations of the SWPBIS system using the SET to ensure implementation is sustained (Muscott, Mann, & LeBrun, 2008). This will aid in measuring the growth or decline of SWPBIS implementation as compared to the baseline data contained in this document to ensure continued implementation fidelity.

This study investigated how the implementation of a SWPBIS system impacted one middle school in the Southeastern United States. The positive findings align well with most of the research that has been conducted related to SWPBIS implementation. These findings are beneficial to any school or school system that may be considering SWPBIS implementation. The methodology is sound yet manageable for researchers wishing to examine schools. Additional SWPBIS research should continue in an effort to ensure that all students are receiving the finest educational experience possible.

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