

Positive Behavioral Support in Middle School:
The Impact of Inconsistent Implementation on School Culture

by

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Dedication

To Bill, Amanda and Mary. You provided me with unconditional love and encouragement when I felt that I was not going to make it through this program. You checked on my writing daily to track my progress and to keep my spirits high. You recognized the “albatross” of this project and made me persevere until I finished. You never questioned why I was doing this, even when I asked myself that very same thing.

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Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm.

– Winston Churchill

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Abstract

As researchers in the field of education search for ways to use evidence-based practices to improve achievement and school climate, teachers and administrators must seek out interventions that will support this objective. The literature reveals that when schools use zero tolerance disciplinary procedures, student achievement is negatively impacted. Teachers and school staff members may utilize organized practices such as Positive Behavioral Support (PBS) to equalize the cultural differences in the classroom and offer a model and an organized plan for success. The PBS program is a preventative approach to discipline and has had much success because of the ability to track measurable data, follow evidence-based practices, and offer a multi-tiered approach to problem behavior. Schools offer first tier universal support wherein the protocol of the PBS behavioral model is taught to all students. Students with recurring problems are offered a secondary tier approach, with various interventions such as “check in and check out” with a teacher who will monitor a student’s behavior more closely. The success of this program is contingent on full staff buy in, fidelity, and implementation with integrity. This study explores classroom culture, achievement, and attitudes toward learning and behavior for teachers, staff and 8th graders at a Midwestern suburban middle school. The findings indicate that inconsistent implementation of the PBS guidelines negatively impacted classroom culture, and ultimately the school climate. Students did not know how to anticipate or interpret expectations from teachers and staff and continued to violate the behavioral rules and receive infractions.

Keywords: Positive Behavioral Support, student perception, school climate, organizational climate, integrity of implementation, student attitude, classroom culture, middle school

Chapter 1: Introduction

Consider the impact of classroom management on school culture, students' relationships with their teachers and peers, classroom engagement, and academic achievement. What are the conditions and protocols required to create the optimal environment for student comfort and learning? The criteria for fair and effective discipline are subjective by nature. Are suspension, expulsion, and police presence in schools necessary to maintain safe schools and maintain effective classroom management and a peaceful school climate?

Statement of Problem

Discipline techniques vary greatly in U.S. school districts. Some districts employ the demerit system, assigning demerits for each transgression that might occur in a school day, some even as specific as requisite demerits for increments of time for tardy students (for example, one demerit per minute late for class). Other districts mandate that the administrators handle all behavioral issues, and students are assigned detentions, suspensions or expulsions. This can be related to zero tolerance for weapons, drugs or bullying, or simply for a student arriving late to class or not having homework completed. Schools defend their choice of discipline to include what may work for their population or demographic.

Discipline issues in U.S. schools. Schools are confronted with the challenge of changing socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic demographics which often can result in behavioral issues, academic struggles, and having to do more with fewer resources (Sugai et al., 2000). The choices for disciplinary action in schools are limited to demerits for detentions, in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions and expulsions. Students who are separated from the classroom for

disciplinary reasons are missing critical instruction and class discussions. A student who misses several days of school might return to class feeling overwhelmed from having missed valuable curriculum and lessons, and not want to put forth the effort to catch up. Having a structured and well-implemented behavioral program in place is instrumental in helping students to understand the school culture and providing a system to follow that allows students to concentrate on their own educational goals. This is essential guidance that helps students prepare for high school and college. Munro (2008) stated that “when alignment is tight and the culture is strong, new students and staff members pick up on an organization’s true vision and values almost immediately” (p. 216).

Discipline issues specific to Fitzpatrick Middle School. I was asked to chair a committee to revisit and reorganize the Positive Behavioral Support Matrix at “Fitzpatrick” Middle School comprised of 600 students in the Midwest. This school began implementation of PBS in 2008 and there had been no updates to the Behavioral Matrix or additional staff development since the inception of the program. This was particularly impactful because the school has had many new teachers and none of the recently hired staff had received training or instruction to implement PBS with fidelity. Teachers who had the initial staff development at the beginning of the program also recognized that they needed workshops or PBS professionals from the county to refresh their knowledge of the guidelines. They indicated that they were not comfortable with situations that would warrant a reward coupon, or what they should do when students continued to disobey the rules, despite having disciplinary procedures implemented. Teachers noted that students were very disruptive in the hallways, in bathrooms, and exiting the school. Students continued to come to class late and unprepared, and staff questioned what

further actions should be taken to stop the behaviors, and requested more education in this regard.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

According to Noguera (2003), “Disciplinary practices in schools often bear a striking similarity to the strategies used to punish in adults in society” (p. 342). When adults are punished for breaking the law, an exclusionary practice is implemented, which corresponds to the nature and severity of the crime. Traditionally, this practice has defined the methods of discipline incurred when a student would break a rule or create a troublesome situation. Disciplinary practices varied from separating the student from the rest of the class by sending them to the back of the room or into the hallway, with a requisite reprimand or lecture. For more serious offenses, students would be sent to the office to talk with an administrator, and perhaps assigned to an “in school suspension” where they would be isolated from fellow classmates for the school day. For more egregious offenses—such as fighting, brandishing a weapon, or threatening another student or adult—the student could be either suspended from school for an assigned period of time, or in a severe case, expelled. For schools that employed the “zero tolerance policy,” the police would be summoned and would intervene in much the same way as they would for an adult when the law was broken. Zero tolerance is predicated on the theory of the “broken window” policy, wherein schools “must react to even minor disruptions in the social order with relatively strong force in order to ‘send a message’ that certain behaviors will not be tolerated” (Skiba, 2014, p. 28). The outcome of exclusion is that students are removed from the classroom, and therefore do not get instruction on the curriculum for that period of time. The irony of this is that it is often the students who are behind academically who are disrupting class

and breaking the rules (Noguera, 2003), and they are ultimately missing more instruction and getting further behind, which is irrational and fundamentally destructive for the students.

Noguera (1995) explained why schools would benefit from structured and well-defined discipline. He stated that the overwhelming prevalence of crime statistics in schools could compel administrators and parents to overreact and look for the most extreme and impactful methods to combat the violence. This often includes zero tolerance policies, police presence, and metal detectors. This in turn perpetuates a culture of fear, rather than heading in a more constructive direction. In light of these statements, it is important to note that the strategies that attempt to severely curtail negative behavior (e.g. zero tolerance) are counterintuitive for achievement in that students who have committed infractions are separated from the classroom and miss valuable instruction. Skiba (2014) noted that schools with lower suspension rates have higher achievement rates due to students remaining in the classroom and not missing valuable instruction and curriculum. This is a precarious dilemma for administrators, because they have to weigh the value of keeping their students safe, versus keeping their students in their potentially unsafe school. Skiba (2014) also indicated that “suspension, expulsion and the increased use of law enforcement in school settings are themselves risk factors for a range of negative academic and life outcomes” (p. 29). However, proponents of zero tolerance argue that measures must be taken immediately, or the social order will not be balanced and the offenders will dig their heels in and perpetuate the behavior. Again, this is a quandary, because the goal of schools is to educate students, not separate them from the classroom via suspensions and expulsions. In order to effectively foster student achievement, there must be a compromise in discipline, where students remain in the classroom but learn appropriate behavior and guidelines for good citizenship. A study in Denver Public Schools showed that when a concerted effort was made to

improve school climate by introducing best practices, the suspension numbers decreased, and academic achievement increased (Gonzalez, 2015).

Students who experience suspensions and expulsions in middle school may ultimately suffer long-term consequences (Losen & Skiba, 2010). A study conducted at Johns Hopkins University tracked young persons from high poverty areas who had difficulty in school as early as grades seven and eight and subsequently ended up in juvenile correctional facilities (Balfanz, Spiridakis, Neild, & Legters, 2003). In the mid-Atlantic region where this study took place, more than thirty students, which can be translated to the equivalent of a classroom of students, were sent to juvenile correctional facilities each year and primarily for non-violent offenses. The year prior to incarceration, these students struggled with school, failed classes, and often missed many school days. The curriculum required for graduation is often never made up and the dropout level was high. The burden on society resulting from the missed opportunities for children and adolescents to learn appropriate behavior, obtain a full education, and earn diplomas reflects the importance of this dissertation research.

Given the problems with schools utilizing punitive measures for discipline and the subsequent consequences, one should consider the potential benefits of a program that would offer a more positive approach to classroom management and school culture. In its 2010 report “School wide Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports,” the Michigan Department of Education defined Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports as:

A proactive, team-based framework for creating and sustaining safe and effective schools. Emphasis is placed on prevention of problem behavior, development of pro-social skills, and the use of data-based problem solving for addressing existing behavior

concerns. School wide PBIS increases the capacity of schools to educate all students utilizing research-based school wide, classroom, and individualized interventions. (p. vii)

This program enables school personnel (teachers and support staff) to teach students appropriate behavior through a structured framework, practice of these new skills, and a system that generously rewards students for acceptable behavior. This program has the potential to reduce time away from the classroom, thereby increasing achievement. It is somewhat easy to facilitate, and offers schools the flexibility to target certain behavior problems prevalent in the school (RESA, 2014).

Bohanon et al. (2006) indicated that the original School Wide Positive Behavioral Support system (SPBS), which was developed in 1991, included information that supports using the following steps:

1. State and post the expectations.
2. Create definitive structures to reinforce these expected behaviors, and reinforce and repeat them.
3. Create a school wide structure to teach expectations.
4. Clarify which behaviors are to be managed by staff, and which issues the administrators should address.
5. Provide appropriate staff development to enable staff to work together to address persistent, minor behaviors.
6. Offer upper level tiered support for the more serious infractions.

These steps are essentially those currently utilized in school systems that have some positive behavioral support program in place. Implementation of the PBS system has been shown to be

most effective at elementary and middle school levels because children are learning how to behave in a school setting (Bohanon et al., 2006).

I explored how the Positive Behavioral Support (PBS)¹ program was being implemented at Fitzpatrick Middle School as this research will both help me determine what changes need to be made to make the extant program more successful and contribute to broader knowledge of successful PBS program implementation. In particular, I wished to retrospectively review the 8th grade class data from 6th grade to the present in order to see if office detention referrals had decreased and to determine which transgressions generated the most referrals. With this data, I analyzed which facets of the PBS Matrix needed to be changed and how the staff should be educated to successfully implement the program. Further, the goal of research was to improve academic and behavioral outcomes within the student population. The school's PBS team had also discovered problems with PBS, which I hypothesized to be attributed to insufficient training and the subsequent lack of "buy-in" by the stakeholders. I wanted to ascertain if students are given daily reinforcement of the appropriate behavioral guidelines, there would be more time for teaching and subsequent greater achievement.

My dissertation study also adds to the literature on classroom culture and achievement using PBS through the process of extensive interviewing with children to capture their perceptions of PBS practices, such as having a teacher focus on the prevention of behavioral problems by education and positive reinforcement, rather than chronic correction of behavior violations using punishment. It is noteworthy that this study considered the buy-in and perceptions of both staff and students for success in order to promote the success of the program

¹ For this study, assume that PBS, SWPBS and PBIS all represent the Positive Behavioral System

and benefit the school environment when it comes to implementing PBS. The current literature elucidates the different disciplinary practices, ranging from zero tolerance—a policy introduced in the late 1980s during the Reagan administration to provide a deterrent for other potentially disruptive or insubordinate students (Skiba, 2014)—to the theory of rewarding students for appropriate behavior. This latter philosophy is the hallmark of the Positive Behavioral Program. Nevertheless, the literature that has been published on PBS has primarily addressed two facets: (a) a district or school that has no organized disciplinary program exploring how PBS would benefit the school, or (b) the inception of the program to a school and the various methods employed to introduce the program to the teachers, students, and staff. Most schools that are studied are either elementary or high schools, so this investigation of a middle school will be distinctive in that regard. This research demonstrates how a suburban middle school has utilized the practices of the PBS program, but has experienced a breakdown in implementation, revealing how this has negatively impacted students and teachers as well as how it has affected classroom and school culture.

Research Questions

This dissertation study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How is the Positive Behavioral Support (PBS) program represented in the classrooms at Fitzpatrick Middle School? How are support staff and teachers implementing PBS? What is being communicated to students regarding the social curriculum and classroom expectations?
2. What are the teachers' attitudes and perspective toward classroom culture in this suburban Midwest school?

3. What do the teachers understand regarding the implementation of PBS within the classroom setting?

Conclusion

Schools have many factors to consider when they are mapping out their disciplinary procedures and classroom management guidelines. Research indicates that students who are separated from the classroom and miss critical instruction do not fare well when returning to school. This study illustrates the different components that make up the Positive Behavioral System program at Fitzpatrick Middle School and demonstrates how proper implementation can positively impact the classroom culture and ultimately achievement.

Chapter 2 elucidates the literature on discipline for general education students, as well as students with special education services. There is also discussion on the ways in which language and cultural barriers can impact discipline and the effectiveness of zero tolerance with subsequent separation from school. The history of the PBS system is outlined and the benefits of using this method of discipline versus the more punitive systems that many school districts currently employ. Chapter 3 illustrates the methods used in this project; student and staff interviews are the primary source of data. Chapter 4 reflects the findings and analysis of the data from the surveys and interviews. Finally, Chapter 5 relates findings to the literature, and recommendations and suggestions are indicated and discussed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In order to examine the literature around the value of school wide Positive Behavioral Support (PBS) programs and the ways in which they impact classroom culture and academic achievement, one must first explore the need for discipline in schools and how punitive discipline impacts student achievement. There is also a need to understand how schools struggle with behavioral issues and the manner in which they implement PBS to teach the students the social curriculum, parameters for good behavior, and guidelines to change the culture in the school. A literature search was conducted using Google Scholar, as well as the ERIC, ProQuest, OmniFile, and JSTOR databases. Initial parameters limited searches to journals published from 2000 to the present, which also provided additional journal articles through their references.

Discipline, Learning, and Achievement

Having a structured school environment and consistent disciplinary policies can promote an environment of stability and order for students, perhaps making it more conducive to learning. Classroom management techniques vary, but having school wide support in place can impact students for greater achievement. The research shows that when a framework of tools is presented to educators, more time can be spent on educating students in the curriculum. This is effective for general education students as well as those students who receive special education services.

General education students. Structured school disciplinary rules and consistent classroom management yield optimal results for a positive educational environment. Larrivee (2005) stated that “classroom management is a critical ingredient in the three-way mix of

effective teaching strategies, which includes meaningful content, powerful teaching strategies, and an organizational structure to support productive learning” (p. vi). Gregory, Skiba, and Noguera (2010) indicated that the “intent of school disciplinary interventions is to preserve order and safety by removing students who break school rules and disrupt the school learning environment” (p. 59). By punishing offenders, schools are ostensibly setting an example to other students and encouraging them to follow the rules. Emmer and Stough (2001) reported that most classroom management research “has been concerned with identifying how teachers bring about student engagement and limit disruption” (p. 104). Considering what factors comprise classroom management Sugai and Horner (2002) suggested the following:

- allocate the maximum time possible for instruction;
- incorporate appropriate physical arrangement of the classroom to maximize engagement and resultant academic achievement; and
- create proactive classroom management parameters and rules.

Sugai and Horner’s suggestions encapsulate an inherent and logical fact about discipline and achievement: a student must be engaged in a learning task to have learning occur. If disruptions are occurring in the classroom, students are distracted from the task and the disruptions interfere with learning.

Larger studies, such as the one conducted by Good and Grouws (1977), showed a correlation between teacher expectations for good behavior and student achievement. When teachers communicated behavioral expectations, maintained order in their classrooms, and designed effective learning tasks, students demonstrated positive outcomes in their learning (Good & Grouws, 1977). This is common sense, in that teachers who are spending less time on disciplinary issues and correcting inappropriate behavior are presumably spending more time on

the instruction of non-distracted, engaged students. Farmer, Reinke, and Brooks (2014) offered a framework to assist teachers with this issue. Behavioral and social interactional perspectives are suggested to offer educators a triad of tools to simultaneously manage general education students and students with behavioral issues within one classroom setting.

School wide Positive Behavioral Support (SWPBS) utilizes evidence-based practices for behavioral reinforcement. Horner, Sugai, and Anderson (2010) explained how the three tiers of interventions enable teachers and administrators to continually monitor students to have a continuum of rewards and consequences. For instance, Tier 1—which is the Primary or Universal Prevention—is school wide (see Figure 2.1). The entire staff participates by teaching the children behavioral expectations and the subsequent rewards for these behaviors. PBS encourages early identification of students who do not comply with the expectations and immediate interventions and programs are put into place. Students who are resistant to the universal interventions are recommended for Tier 2—or Secondary Prevention—which includes individualized programs to closely monitor behavioral progress. Students have one-on-one direct instruction, increased structure, and continual monitoring of the students' progress. These children are often put on a behavior plan, which is tailored specifically for that student and enables the teacher to have clearly defined guidelines of what to expect regarding the behavior of the student. The children with the most problematic behavior are advanced to the final tier, Tertiary Prevention. Within this segment, behavioral perspective is monitored closely, with more intense individualized instruction and with the guidance of a behavior support team to ensure greater success (Horner et al., 2010). The second and third tier supports are advantageous for students who are emotionally impaired or those students receiving special education services

because they greatly benefit academic and behaviorally from the one-on-one interventions and direct instruction.

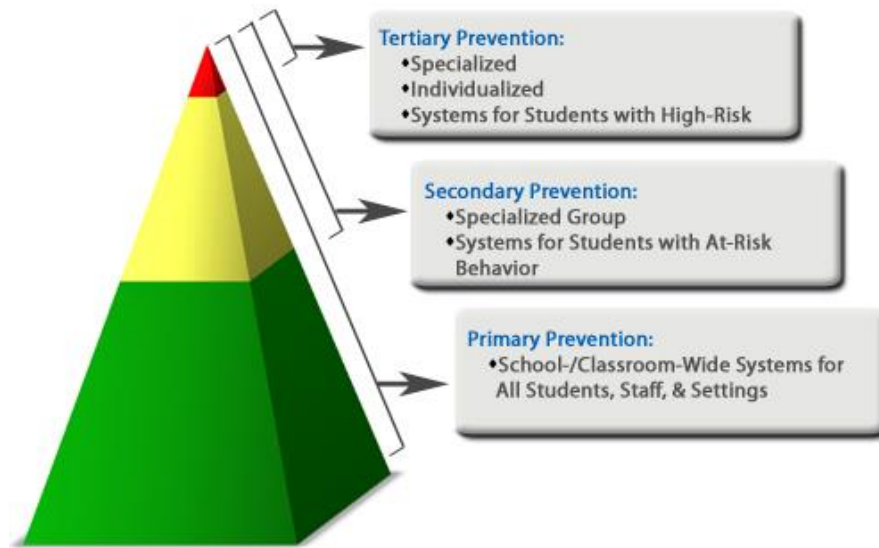


Figure 2.1. Continuum of School Wide Instructional & Positive Behavior (Source: <http://www.sjUSD.org/student-services/pbis/what-is-pbis/>)

Students with behavioral issues and emotional/behavior disorders. There is general consensus that mainstreaming students who receive special education services, as well as those students who receive assistance for emotional impairments (EI) is advantageous. Note also that when teachers offer additional support and modifications to the curriculum, the result is equal or better outcomes for academic achievement (Rea, McLaughlin, & Walther-Thomas, 2002). Hieneman, Dunlap, and Kincaid (2005) stated, “Classroom-based SWPBS may be essential to integrating students with behavioral disorders. Structured, supportive contexts created by classroom-based SWPBS may, in some ways, resemble special education programs in that the environment and teacher responses are engineered to facilitate appropriate behavior” (p. 785). However, behavioral challenges can arise and addressing these behavioral concerns within a diverse classroom of children with varying needs can be difficult. Schools with zero tolerance or

other punitive disciplinary programs have been shown to be relatively ineffective and do not offer a positive classroom culture for students with behavioral concerns (Skiba & Peterson, 2000).

Mainstreaming children with emotional/behavior disorders (EBD) requires a program that can be somewhat individualized. School wide PBS is successful because it can be effectively implemented within the classroom and still provide opportunities to address individual problems with behavior. Note that PBS is effective when mainstreaming students with behavioral disorders, “SWPBS is well suited to helping students with behavioral disorders adapt their behavior to general education classrooms so that emotional and intellectual growth can occur” (Hieneman et al., 2005, p. 780). For optimal success, this individual behavioral plan requires preparation on the part of the special education team at the school, with input from the social worker, special education teacher, and general education teachers.

Sugai et al. (2000) suggested several factors that should be included in the interventions for students with EBD and which could be successfully implemented within the parameters of the PBS program. In addition to the aforementioned behavioral perspectives that address modifications of the physical environment and arranging cues for positive behavior reinforcement, additional suggestions included giving individualized attention to teaching pro-social communication skills and self-management awareness as well as teaching students increased tolerance for unpleasant situations (Hieneman et al., 2005). These interventions must be implemented class-wide, rather than school wide, and would fall into the category of Secondary Preventions within the PBS program. Other methods to help students with EBD adapt to the general classroom setting include offering the students assistance with completing assignments and modifying the curriculum—both of which likely fall under the student’s

Individual Educational Plan (IEP)—in order to reduce frustration and help curtail poor behavior. If classroom modifications do not work, it would be necessary to seek a more individualized plan of action.

Horner and Sugai (2009) highlighted two factors that contribute to a successful PBS program. The first is the implementation of screening to identify which students might need additional support and the second is the establishment of continuity for those students. When the school is aware that students with EBD are to be mainstreamed within the general classroom setting, it is important for the teacher to have additional support available for potential behavior problems. Assuming that the students have had a special education referral or an IEP created, the school social worker or psychologist could set up behavior plans for students within the confines of PBS, such as one of the Secondary Prevention models of best practice. There are several excellent interventions available within this Tier 2 model.

One of these interventions is *check-in/check-out* (CICO), wherein a teacher or support staff member meets with the student before school or before class to “check in” and talk about behavior expectations for each class. At the end of the day, often during homeroom time or advisory period, time is taken to reflect about behavior and discuss other choices that could have been made, and subsequently “check out.” Parents are involved in this process and are usually required to sign their child’s planner or notebook. Another intervention that works well for students with behavioral problems is *check and connect*: “The core components of check and connect include relationship building, routine monitoring, individual intervention, long-term commitment, persistent support, problem solving, and affiliation with school and learning” (Horner et al., 2010, p. 9). What makes check and connect so effective is that when school personnel identify students with at-risk behavior problems, such as EBD, they can link peers

(classmates) up with the students for additional support. This has been documented to improve social and academic outcomes and to reduce the frequency of students dropping out of school (Horner et al., 2010).

As Skiba and Peterson (2003) noted, “The experiences of students at risk for behavior problems leave them with social perceptions that are a poor fit with the standard expectations of most school environments” (p. 68). The behavior of these students appears irrational to teachers or administrators, but “to the student whose experience has yielded a different set of social expectations, these behaviors may seem perfectly sensible, and in fact the only alternative” (Skiba & Peterson, 2003, p. 68). These children need explicit instruction in the social curriculum via the PBS program in order to have social and academic success, and this often needs to start at the elementary school level. An example of this is *First Step to Success* (FSS), which is an evidence-based program that is highly successful at reducing problem behavior with resistant students when implemented with fidelity (Walker et al., 2009). A student who has been identified as a behavioral risk has an individual FSS coach who provides individualized training in appropriate behavior. Coaches generally include school psychologists, counselors, behavioral specialists, and resource room teachers who work closely with the classroom teacher and parents: “The coach’s focus is to support teachers and parents with developing skills to teach at-risk students positive replacement behaviors and to provide reinforcement appropriately and consistently (Woodbridge et al., 2014, p. 96). If the student’s behavior improves, the coach pulls back and allows the teacher to “take over” the implementation of the prompts and cues for instruction of the social curriculum with continuing support from the coach.

Farmer et al. (2014) indicated that there is a great need to create individualized plans to help students with high incidence disabilities who do not respond to the universal supports (Tier

1) in PBS. The authors stated that interventions are needed “to teach, evoke and reinforce desired replacement behaviors of the target students as well as contextual interventions that focus on students who engage her or him in problematic behavior patterns” (p. 158). They also expressed concern that these interventions will be short-lived unless the intervention targets the exact skill deficit in the problem student. This means that many factors should be taken into account, such as the social ecology, physical environment, supportive peers within the classroom, and having the teacher offer continual reassurance and reminders. Horner and Sugai (2009) stated that schools need to use “progress monitoring to assess a) the fidelity with which support is provided and b) the impact of support on student academic and social outcomes” (p. 2). If the interventions for the behavioral issues of these children are not effective, they need to be modified and adjusted for the individual student with EBD. This is part of Tier 3 of PBS and it is an integral part of resistant students’ behavioral education.

Language and Cultural Disparities in Discipline

School disciplinary practices result in thousands of students being suspended or expelled and, thus, precluding them from receiving appropriate instruction (Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, & Bachman, 2008). Wallace et al. (2008) noted that African American students are more likely to be on the receiving end of this harsh discipline (usually zero tolerance) that ultimately results in suspension or expulsion and subsequent missed curriculum. Wallace et al. (2008) also examined variables other than race that might be vectors related to disproportionate punishment. Townsend (2000) speculated that cultural disparities due to experiential differences could result in a cultural clash between middle class teachers and impoverished students. Students in low socioeconomic situations who come to school hungry or exhausted from their home environment are not able to concentrate in school and they frequently act out (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008).

Teachers can mistakenly identify this behavior as insubordination and assign punitive consequences where they are not warranted.

Cultural disparities may also cause non-verbal communication cues or body language to be misinterpreted as threatening or disrespectful—as may verbiage common in some cultures but not others (Wallace et al., 2008). The language of discipline in a low socioeconomic household may not include a gentle admonishment or warning look, but rather, a physical consequence (Wallace et al., 2008). Typical communication between teenaged students’ “verbal sparring” can be characterized as threatening by a teacher (Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, & Curran, 2004). Therefore, this disparity in cultural communication can lead to unjustifiable punishment. Unnecessary disciplinary interventions can occur when “teachers and students come from different cultural backgrounds—a situation that is becoming increasingly prevalent” (Weinstein et al., 2004, p. 25). Culture plays a significant role in these perceptions, so it is important that all expectations are carefully explained and that rules are well defined and fair. Teacher education programs, pre-service instruction, and staff development classes would do well to address this situation, especially for new or inexperienced teachers.

Punitive Discipline, Zero Tolerance, and Exclusion

Traditionally, schools have addressed behavioral problems with increased punitive measures. A survey on crime and safety in schools showed that 48% of public schools utilized punitive consequences against students; 74% of these actions were suspensions that lasted five days or more, 5% were expulsions, and 20% were transfers to specialized schools (Dinkes, Catladi, Lin-Kelly, & Snyder, 2007). This translates into many days of missed academic instruction which has an “adverse impact on suspended students’ achievement” (Arcia, 2006, p. 359). Research has shown that the utilization of policies other than zero tolerance, separation,

and suspensions are more effective in dealing with behavior infractions (Aber, Brown, & Jones, 2003).

In the U.S., problems regarding school safety and violence are superseding concerns about academic achievement such that the public seeks reform for school discipline policy in public education (Noguera, 1995). To regulate and counteract violence, schools have resorted to including metal detectors, locker searches, police presence, security guards, and zero tolerance within their policies. Zero tolerance is an approach that will ensure that a student is removed from the school for a violation of a pre-determined rule—such as the possession of a firearm or other weapon—and will be either suspended, expelled, or transferred to another school. These policies persist in many schools that espouse zero tolerance and are negatively impacting achievement (Arcia, 2006). In their quest to appear tough on policy, schools have often treated the offending students as criminals (Noguera, 1995), and have enlisted the help of law enforcement officers to enforce violations, rather than school officials. Suspensions and expulsions have been “denounced as ineffective and counterproductive” (Arcia, 2006, p. 359), yet the practice of zero tolerance continues to be widespread.

Zero tolerance is the most inflexible and punitive of all of the school discipline policies and has grown to become the disciplinary approach of choice in many schools (Skiba & Peterson, 2003). Since the passage of the “Gun Free Schools Act” and in response to the 1994 Safe Schools Act, schools have extended this zero tolerance to include fighting in school, problems with chronic tardy arrival to class, and incomplete homework assignments (Kupchik, 2009). Many schools toughen their policies to placate parents and teachers, even while knowing that the policy is not effective in preventing future infractions. Schools continue with this harsh approach for a range of indiscretions rather than for just serious offenses. For example, Reyes

(2006) noted that in Texas the majority of students suspended (96%) or expelled (85%) utilizing zero tolerance rules received these punishments imprudently, rather than for a mandatory offense. This rampant use of zero tolerance policy for discretionary reasons, rather than to ensure school safety, can negatively affect student achievement, students' academic performance, as well as long-term social and economic stability (Wallace et al., 2008).

Skiba and Knesting (2001) indicated that the purpose of zero tolerance is to implement severe consequences to deter students from violent and inappropriate behavior, remove offenders immediately from school, and set an example for others by using extreme measures of punishment. Regarding the organizational structure and instructional goals that a school would consider when creating a disciplinary policy, Skiba and Peterson (2003) suggested the following:

- guaranteed safety for students and staff in a school and preventing incidents of violence;
- creating a positive culture within the classroom and the school for optimal achievement;
- teaching students requisite skills for behavior, otherwise known as the “social curriculum”; and
- having instructional goals reiterated regularly to prevent future occurrences of misbehavior and violence.

It is important to understand that police presence and zero tolerance will not help fulfill these goals, because there is no focus on social skills and good behavior. There is only reactionary behavior toward “the bad” rather than acknowledging and rewarding “the good.” Programs providing successful alternatives to “zero tolerance” need to focus on rewards rather than punishment in a positive school climate with clearly defined rules and goals. A well-trained,

compassionate, and engaged school staff and administration must initiate these practices in order to foster the behavioral and academic skills necessary for optimal achievement and a successful school culture. These skills should be reinforced at home, to ensure that school and community share the same positive mindset. The goal is to create a culture of success, both socially and academically. PBS is an optimal approach with positive disciplinary effects that provides an alternative to disciplinary programming with negative educational effects.

There are many issues to consider regarding school disciplinary practices, but the primary one is that it must be effective. Schools must do all that they can to ensure safety for students and staff. A climate of fear and police presence is not the answer to curtailing violence and poor behavior in schools. We must educate students to develop appropriate social skills and teach children lifelong habits of good manners and proper behavior. While it is true that a school will gain immediate relief from problem behavior by relying on suspension or expulsion, it is important to address the counterproductive nature of these practices that result in the exclusion of these children from the classroom and the loss of instruction. In addition, students who do not like going to school may consider this separation as a reward and a positive reinforcement for misbehavior. Furthermore, there is no opportunity for these children to learn appropriate and expected behaviors (Skiba & Peterson, 2003). Researchers have shown how proactive behavior instruction reduces missed instruction and results in less challenging behavior in the classroom (Bohanon et al., 2006).

Positive Discipline: Classroom Management Overview

Emmer and Stough (2001) indicated that there are two key concepts that emerged from their research. The first is that effective classroom management is more successful when it is in a preventative mode, rather than a reactionary mode. The second is that teachers create an optimal

classroom environment when they effectively communicating their expectations and appropriate behavioral norms to their students. In other words, if teachers take the time to instruct students on what is expected behaviorally in their classroom, establish clear rules and guidelines, and curtail behavioral issues before they become big issues at the onset of the school year, they will have a more successful classroom climate and increased student cooperation throughout the year. As noted by Emmer and Stough (2001), “Effective teachers maintained their management system by monitoring and providing prompt feedback . . . and by consistently applying classroom procedures and consequences” (p. 105). When assessing the relationship between delivering guidelines to students and reinforcing those guidelines daily it is important to consider students’ perceptions of classroom culture and achievement. In addition to teaching students appropriate expectations and parameters for good behavior, researchers suggested that arranging the classroom in a manner conducive to good behavior and carefully elucidating consequences are effective measures to ensure optimal conduct (Emmer, Evertson, & Worsham, 2003).

What unfolds from the research are some key practices to support the guidelines of classroom management, much of which corroborates with what Sugai and Horner (2002) elucidated. One practice is to maximize structure, which refers to the way in which the classroom space is defined. Researchers suggest that the class should be arranged to minimize crowding and reduce the incidence of distractions as much as possible (Ahrentzen & Evans, 1984; Weinstein, 1977). Another strategy is to display, teach, monitor, and reinforce expectations for discipline. An example of this is the mantra for the Positive Behavioral Support Program (Michigan Department of Education, 2010), recited daily in schools: be safe, be responsible, and be respectful. Guidelines are posted around the school, and reviewed regularly in class (Sharpe, Brown, & Crider, 1995). Teachers subsequently provide feedback for appropriate behavior and

they correct disruptive behavior. The combination of these strategies, posting and reviewing rules with active engagement is a very successful classroom management strategy (Greenwood, Hops, Delquadri, & Guild, 1974). A third practice is to keep students engaged during classroom instruction via passive behavior (listening to a lesson) or active behavior (asking or answering a question or commenting on the lesson). The rationale behind this academic incentive is that when children are actively engaged, they are not being disruptive or acting up (Greenwood, Horton, & Utley, 2002). Teachers can use varied strategies for engagement, such as direct questioning, guided notes, or peer tutoring (wherein students are paired up and “teach” their partner what they have learned, which allows the teacher to circulate freely about the classroom).

It is also important to acknowledge *appropriate* behavior in a structured and organized manner (Alberto & Troutman, 2006). Examples of this strategy include praising desired behavior of individuals or groups of students who are following behavioral expectations or reinforcing these behaviors using rewards—such as “points,” “marbles in a jar,” “tickets,” or some other incentive, such as a homework pass. This can be a school wide initiative, such as the Positive Behavior Support Program, an individual teacher initiating these incentives, or perhaps a team of grade-level teachers. Equally, one must acknowledge *inappropriate* behavior in a structured and organized way (Alberto & Troutman, 2006). Strategies to address inappropriate behavior can include briefly informing the student of what was observed and what is expected in concrete terms, setting appropriate goals for behavior with the student and providing a reward or incentive if that goal is met in a specified time period, or using planned ignoring—simply ignoring the inappropriate attention-seeking behavior while praising others’ appropriate behavior. If incentives have been given to students for appropriate behavior, they can be returned for poor behavior and students given the opportunity to earn them back.

Teacher-student relationships. Although the aforementioned researchers (Alberto & Troutman, 2006; Ahrentzen & Evans, 1984; Weinstein, 1977) indicated that a choice-learning environment usually goes hand-in-hand with a well-supervised classroom, the opposite is not necessarily true (McCaslin & Good, 1998). Students in a well-supervised classroom are not always assured of having an optimal learning environment. Some forms of discipline might put students at odds with their learning (McCaslin & Good, 1998). More than likely, this is because there is no evidence of solid student-teacher relationships, even when the classroom appears to be running in an orderly fashion. In a meta-analysis of over 100 studies, Marzano, Marzano, and Pickering (2003) revealed that those teachers who had nurtured high-quality relationships with their students had one-third fewer discipline problems, rule transgressions, and other issues over a one-year period than did those who did not.

For teachers to be effective in their classroom management techniques, it is important for the students not to feel as if they are being intimidated. Twemlow and Fonagy (2005) explained that when a teacher “uses his or her power to punish, manipulate, or disparage a student beyond what would be a reasonable disciplinary procedure” (p. 2387) it negatively affects the teacher-student relationship. Since teacher behavior is critical in determining classroom dynamics, it is important that the students feel they have a quality relationship with the teacher. Mayer (2002) spelled out several factors relating to teacher-student relationships that may contribute to a punitive classroom culture, rather than a productive classroom environment. For instance, teachers who excessively rely on punitive measures of control or have ambiguous classroom policies could perhaps initiate a poor classroom environment. Another consideration is that when students lack integral social skills that would otherwise enable them to have academic success—such as paying attention, good manners, and complying with requests—this may result in such

students not being appropriately involved in classroom discussions or active learning. Mayer (2002) also stressed the importance of teachers understanding how to reconcile and respond to student differences. From Mayer's research, one can infer that teachers who engage students, cultivate positive relationships, and do not rely heavily on punitive measures for their classroom management policies will have a more beneficial setting in their classroom.

Osher, Bear, Sprague, and Doyle (2010) stated that the emphasis should be on "cooperation, engagement, and motivation, and on students learning to be part of a dynamic system, rather than on compliance, control, and coercion" (p. 49). School programs that encourage these factors, such as PBS, support a school wide system wherein teachers communicate classroom expectations, school guidelines and rules, and reward students for following them (Horner, Sugai, Todd, & Lewis-Palmer, 2005). Schools that promote cooperation, engagement, and motivation reported fewer behavioral problems and enjoyed a better school culture. Teachers who welcome and foster positive relationships with students had less problem behavior within their classrooms and fewer transgressions of rules. The key strategies discussed in this section are summarized in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

Summary of Positive Interventions for a Healthy Classroom Setting

Classroom Management Technique	Author(s)
Allocate maximum time possible for instruction	Sugai & Horner, 2002
Incorporate appropriate physical arrangement of the classroom, arrange to minimize crowding and reduce the incidence of distractions	Emmer et al., 2003 Sugai & Horner, 2002 Ahrentzen & Evans, 1984 Weinstein, 1977
Create proactive classroom management parameters and rules by effectively communicating expectations	Osher et al., 2010 Sugai & Horner, 2002 Emmer & Stough, 2001 Good & Grouws, 1977
Preventive mode, rather than reactive, carefully elucidating consequences	Sprague & Golly, 2004 Emmer et al., 2003 Emmer & Stough, 2001
Teachers do not use their position of power to bully students	Twemlow & Fonagy, 2005
Keep students engaged during instruction either actively or passively	Greenwood et al., 2002
Acknowledge <i>appropriate</i> behavior in a structured and organized method	Bohanon et al., 2009 McKevitt & Braaksma, 2007 Alberto & Troutman, 2006 Lassen et al., 2006 Horner et al., 2005 Luiselli et al., 2005
Acknowledge <i>inappropriate</i> behavior in a structured and organized method	Alberto & Troutman, 2006
Display, teach, monitor and reinforce expectations for discipline	Michigan Dept. of Education, 2010 Bohanon et al., 2009 Horner et al., 2005 Sharpe et al., 1995 Greenwood et al., 1974
Develop high-quality relationships with students	Marzano et al., 2003 Mayer, 2002

Take cultural considerations into account when disciplining students	Sugai et al., 2011 Payne, 2003
Set measurable behavior goals and collect and analyze data	Sugai et al., 2000
Monitoring and providing prompt feedback	Emmer & Stough, 2001
Consistently apply classroom procedures and consequences	Emmer & Stough, 2001

Positive Behavior Support System

Positive behavior support system (PBS) is a school wide program that attends to behavioral issues at all levels. It is designed to be a preventive rather than reactionary program to address school climate, discipline, and to promote achievement (Sprague & Golly, 2004). The guidelines for PBS include, (a) *data* for accurate decision making, (b) measurable *outcomes* supported by data, (c) *best practices* with accompanying evidence that these outcomes are achievable and (d) *systems* that efficiently and effectively support implementation of these practices (Michigan Department of Education, Office of Special Education. 2015). Schools can establish clear expectations for student behavior and achievement, while still “providing firm but fair discipline” (Osher et al., 2010, p. 50). McKevitt and Braaksma (2007) remarked that PBS is predicated on the hypothesis that traditional school disciplinary actions—such as removal from a classroom, expulsion, and exclusionary suspensions—are ineffective. Schools can also teach the social curriculum, meaning that they can instruct students how to behave in a socially appropriate manner. Schools that successfully follow PBS have a shared set of expectations and practice similar implementation so that children know what is expected of them and have parameters for good behavior (McKevitt & Braaksma, 2007). McKevitt and Braaksma (2007) summarize the main highlights of the PBS program:

- communicating concise classroom and school rules and expectations;

- regular instruction to students regarding appropriate behavior in a social situation, with adults and teachers;
- monitoring compliance of the rules;
- providing much positive reinforcement for predetermined appropriate behavior and adhering to school and classroom rules; and
- doling out negative consequences in a consistent manner when guidelines are not followed.

PBS is based on the hypothesis that when faculty and staff members actively teach expectations for behavior, it will positively affect school climate. Osher et al. (2010) stated, “The primary aim of PBS is to decrease problem behavior in schools and classrooms and to develop integrated systems of support for students and adults at the school wide, classroom and individual student levels” (p. 50). Researchers have shown correlation between a healthy school climate and a reduced use of drugs, less aggressive behavior, a decrease in school violence, and increased academic achievement (Caldarella, Shatzer, Gray, Young, & Young, 2011).

One of the benefits of the PBS program is that it promotes a healthy school climate. A study in Denver Public Schools showed that when a concerted effort was made to improve school climate by introducing best practices, the suspension levels decreased and academic achievement increased (Gonzalez, 2015). For many reasons, school climate must be a priority in all schools. The manner in which teachers approach problems can greatly affect classroom climate, so it is beneficial to have a well-defined plan in place where teachers and students are aware of expectations and practice them daily. PBS is used as a tool to improve school climate through the education of students in the social curriculum and the positive reinforcement that the children receive from demonstrating appropriate behavior.

PBS has been shown to reduce the number of students who are excluded from school due to suspensions and expulsions and to lower the dropout rate. Many of the students from more punitive settings do not return to school and may ultimately settle in the juvenile detention system (Bohanon, Flannery, Malloy, & Fenning, 2009). Bohanon et al. (2009) indicated that the PBS program involves clarifying teacher expectations and conveying these expectations to the students, as well as positively reinforcing behavior of those students who meet said expectations, thereby preventing the negative behavior from being the expected norm in the school. The program is comprised of an organized and consistently implemented structure of interventions with the goal of teaching behavior as social curriculum. Schools must implement the framework with fidelity for the best outcomes. However, this is difficult because the perception of behavior is subjective and some teachers and administrators may regard certain behavior as unacceptable, while others do not. These “hidden rules” need to be elucidated to students so that cultural considerations can be taken into account (Payne, 2003).

Sugai, O’Keefe, and Fallon (2011) indicated that the primary level of intervention should include the communication of school expectations and behaviors into language that all students can understand. Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds may not have had behavioral guidelines taught to them because “the notion that discipline should be instructive and change behavior is not part of the culture” (Payne, 2003, p. 100) so educators need to be mindful of this when they are teaching these students the social curriculum. The school behavioral program should be part of the curriculum and reinforced often. For example, guidelines can be dispersed around the school in hallways, bathrooms, and classrooms to remind students and staff of the parameters of accepted behavior. As with all outcomes, behavioral goals should be measurable. Sugai et al. (2000) showed that data must be collected and analyzed with precision and that

students who do not respond to the primary levels of intervention must be advanced to the secondary and tertiary prevention levels. Sugai et al. (2000) also indicated that, although implementation details vary, there are factors that are common to all age groups and behaviors. Two significant factors are curriculum redesign (teaching new skills) and modification of behavior for both the students and the teachers. Curriculum redesign is particularly important in the upper levels of intervention, where students must learn the expectations on a more personalized and individual level with support from social workers, family, counselors, school psychologists, teachers, and administrators. Specific monitoring plans must be put into place—such as “check-in/check-out,” where a mentor can support the resistant student into a closely monitored environment.

Turnbull et al. (2002) indicated that “a key focus of PBS is building responsive environments that ‘stack the deck’ in favor of appropriate student behavior and preferred quality of life outcomes” (p. 378). When the universal supports are in place—such as educating all students regarding the behavior that is expected of them, reinforcing these guidelines on a regular basis, and rewarding adherence to these rules—the outcome of positive classroom culture will be achieved. Turnbull et al. (2002) also clarified the importance of understanding the difference between school wide supports versus universal supports: *school wide* means that the entire school is actively involved in the PBS program, whereas *universal supports* means that all students are involved in learning behavior and the social curriculum, which represents the first phase of PBS. When students are not responsive to the universal supports, they are designated to advance to the secondary and then tertiary parts of the program and provided with more intensive and focused tools—such as “check-in/check-out” or mentoring—thereby keeping all of the

children within the framework of the program even though some experience more rigor in the scope.

Environmental considerations within PBS. It is implicit that the environment is a factor that can influence children's behaviors. School climate reflects this, and often it has been noted that a poor school climate caused by ineffective administration, lack of purpose, and low expectations for achievement can foster delinquency and antisocial behavior (McEvoy & Welker, 2000). When the school has no agency with the student population, this reflects upon the students' self-image and the resulting behavioral transgressions will result in an increased number of school discipline referrals. Increased absenteeism, poor academic achievement, and subsequent delinquency will potentially result in suspension and expulsion. Ultimately, the students may drop out of school (McEvoy & Welker, 2000).

The formula for success in reducing the propensity for negative behaviors lies in balancing the supports embedded in the physical environment with the individualized treatment of the student. Farmer et al. (2014) indicated that the interventions that target the antisocial behaviors of students with EBD should prioritize monitoring the classroom ecology and general school setting while also conducting an individualized analysis of the skills deficit. Teachers can implement well-defined physical spaces via seating arrangements and work areas to benefit the students, as well as "monitoring systems that will reduce conditions that will trigger problem behaviors" (Reinke & Herman, 2002, p. 556). PBS incorporates many of these factors, including the general atmosphere in the school, cultivating classroom culture, and rewarding positive behavior which can reduce the proclivity of triggers for negative behavior.

Theoretically, linking behavior and physical environment is a premise for PBS because students who do not respond to the primary level of implementation in the program receive more

individualized interventions and support, bridging behavior and the physical setting. The goal for these students receiving secondary and tertiary level support is to promote better behavior and increased academic achievement. Focusing on positive behavior may result in increased academic achievement and focusing on improving academic achievement may improve social behavior (Luiselli, Putnam, Handler, & Feinberg, 2005). Improving a student's behavior and academic achievement is a daunting task, but it is one that PBS shows potential in achieving. A positive school climate can affirm strong interpersonal relationships and give students the tools and opportunities to reduce antisocial behavior and potentially increase academic achievement (McEvoy & Welker, 2000).

Teacher-student communication within PBS. The capacity for students and teachers to trust each other is critical to maintaining mutually respectful relationships (Brown, 2003). When teachers develop appropriate means of communicating with their students, it helps to create a safe and comfortable learning environment—which in turn affords less cause for punitive consequences. Managing children is difficult and complex; there is not one correct way to go about it. However, students respond to teachers who make an effort to understand their culture and treat them in an appropriately authoritative and respectful manner. Establishing and maintaining clear expectations for learning and behavior are essential for good classroom supervision. PBS was created in hopes of increasing student engagement, reinforcing positive performance and behavior, and teaching social life skills (Lassen, Steele, & Sailor, 2006; Luiselli et al., 2005). Rather than correcting behavior with punitive measures, PBS focuses on proactive preventative tactics to educate children in the social curriculum. McCaslin and Good (1998) shared that it is of the utmost importance to teach children how to exercise self-discipline with their behavior and that this will supersede the need for teachers to act as authority figures, as well

as the emphasis on external control. This differentiates discipline (correction) from classroom management (prevention).

Researchers have acknowledged the ways in which praise and teacher communication affect students' behaviors and noted that students need to observe that their appropriate behaviors are noticed and acknowledged (McKevitt & Braaksma, 2007). For this reason, the primary level of PBS includes some tangible reward system. PBS tickets can be written for good behavior and be turned in by the student for a treat or other reward, and placed in a drawing at the end of the week for a gift card. For best results for this positive reinforcement, students should have input toward the choice of rewards. Students enjoy and appreciate being recognized and this can promote student and teacher behavioral changes. Students must demonstrate suitable behavior and follow the PBS guidelines—which should be aligned to the school disciplinary policies (McKevitt & Braaksma, 2007)—and teachers must be attentive to good behavior rather than focusing on daily transgressions.

Effective Implementation of PBS: Case Studies

Horner et al. (2010) noted that when PBS was implemented in middle schools with fidelity, it resulted in an increase of positive outcomes—such as a more favorable school climate, improved academic achievement, and a reduction of office detention referrals (ODRs). Flannery and Sugai (2009) stated the following regarding successful implementation:

Implementation of effective PBS practices requires formal and active supports. Simply asking staff to adopt a new practice is ineffective, and active system supports, like coaching, active administrator support, team-based implementation and decision making, are important considerations for implementation fidelity and sustained use. (p. 19)

This section explores the outcomes of case studies of schools that addressed problems with implementation and presents how the practices employed by these schools could potentially inform the implementation of the PBS program of other schools.

A study by Flannery, Fenning, Kato, and McIntosh (2013) examined six high school sites, including four schools that were implementation schools and two that were comparator schools. The implementation sites executed an organized delivery of PBS instruction and coaching. This plan included the following considerations for both the implementation and comparator sites:

- A Leadership Team created to focus on school-wide behavior guidelines and/or academics
- A school administrator who was able to demonstrate support for the Leadership Team and who was willing to attend some of the meetings and/or be accessible to the Leadership Team facilitator for assistance and consultation

This plan included the following considerations that were provided solely to the implementation sites:

- Allocation of 16 hours of training for the Leadership Team to have a solid foundation of understanding of the PBS policies
- Technical support for the action plan and an additional 6 hours of technical training for the Leadership Team
- Administration of a school-wide evaluation to determine fidelity of PBS implementation, which included a visit to the school, meetings with the administration, teachers, and students, and evaluation of school records and ODRs

The study included a pretest intervention—wherein the schools were analyzed for fidelity of implementation—and an additional examination of each school’s ODRs. The implementation sites then worked on strategies for teacher buy-in, team participation, creating lessons and programs to educate students on PBS and the social curriculum, and professional development for the staff. They created plans to engage the administration, office staff, teachers, support staff, parents, and students so the PBS philosophy could be universally understood and everyone would be on the same page with implementation.

As previously mentioned, four of the schools used PBS and the two schools used as the control did not. The strategies utilized in the study were successful, in that there was a statistically significant positive association between the schools in the study that had implemented PBS and the level of problem behavior. ODRs significantly decreased over time, while at the comparator schools the ODRs increased. Although this case study examined PBS in high schools, these same instructional strategies would benefit middle schools as well. This study illustrates how a dedicated effort by administration, staff, and students can result in successful outcomes from PBS implementation.

Another study with similar results was a case study by Morrissey, Bohanon, and Fenning (2010). In this study, the researchers addressed how the regular instruction of behavioral expectations and social curriculum could impact urban schools. The findings illustrated the importance of teaching behavior expectations to students and the outcome was again a decrease in ODRs after the systematic instruction of expectations and the acknowledgement of the students’ positive behavior. The authors concluded that “Teaching and acknowledging appropriate behaviors on a prevention-oriented basis, rather than reacting through suspension once a problem occurs, may be the first step in turning the tide toward safer schools designed for

keeping students in school and experiencing success” (p. 27). Similar to the study by Flannery et al. (2013), a core PBS team was created. The team began to analyze problem behaviors to determine which general positive behaviors should be requested for the universal guidelines. Once the PBS teams in the study had decided on the expectations, the entire student body had precise and regular instruction in the behavioral rules and what was expected of them.

Bohanen et al. (2006) examined a large and culturally diverse urban high school within Chicago Public Schools, and analyzed which interventions and strategies might be successful with these students to reduce ODR's. The school chose four positive universal goals: “Be Respectful; Be Responsible; Be Careful; Be Academically Engaged” and their Discipline Leadership Team created a full curriculum to help students and staff create a positive school climate. The study by Morrissey et al. (2010) indicated that the schools in this study provided students and staff with assemblies, video productions, and classroom instruction of behavior expectations, so the entire school had the opportunity to learn the same information.

Students received positive recognition on a regular basis when a staff member would “catch” a student demonstrating good behavior. The students received tickets to redeem for prizes. The authors indicated that the tickets were primarily for the school staff to start concentrating on noting of positive behaviors and reduce their focus on negative behaviors. Teachers initiated role-playing with students to emphasize why a behavior might be important and thus reinforced those behaviors with the students. Unlike the study by Flannery et al. (2014), this study did not utilize a set of comparator schools to justify the outcomes, but the ODRs decreased significantly after the introduction of direct instruction of expectations and social behavior rules to the students and staff.

In their report on PBS implementation, Flannery and Sugai (2009) included pertinent information for administrators regarding the use of professional development for PBS. These suggestions include: (a) implementing precise and explicit instruction of PBS with the staff, (b) scheduling regular professional development, preferably during the school days so all teachers are able to attend, (c) include classroom management techniques for teachers, (d) be active in the professional development, rather than assigning it to an outside source, and (e) embedding PBS training into new teacher orientation to ensure that all teachers have the same instruction. This administrative initiative is an important factor that can contribute to a viable PBS team. Another critical factor is fidelity of implementation.

Flannery and Sugai (2009) described a case study at Fruita Monument High School (FMHS) in Mesa County Valley School District in Colorado. The new FMHS principal came from a middle school that had very successfully used PBS, and organized a “kick-off” consisting of a review of the discipline data at FMHS. The principal initiated the new discipline program by welcoming staff engagement and suggestions about behavioral issues at school, thereby involving the staff to promote sufficient buy-in to this new disciplinary program. Six staff members subsequently attended a professional seminar to learn the rationale and protocol for PBS and then afterwards met regularly with the teachers in small groups to jointly create a teaching matrix for PBS. It was not until five months after the arrival of the new principal that the program was formally introduced to the staff at a February “in-service” staff development. The planning up to this point had been detailed and precise, and while the staff members were not given directives on “what to do,” they were sufficiently included in the training to understand the new process. What is significant in this situation is the involvement of the entire school in planning the program. The principal’s philosophy of soliciting teacher input for implementation,

as well as involving the entire staff via in-service professional coaching was very worthwhile. Significant in this case study is the principal at the helm of the program, guiding and supporting each step.

A case study at Addison Trail High School (ATHS) in a western suburb of Chicago, Illinois revealed how student engagement was used to enhance staff participation and successful implementation of PBS (Flannery & Sugai, 2009). At ATHS, the students were recruited from teacher referrals to form a “Student Advisory Group.” From that group, the students were divided into small groups of approximately 10 students from varying grade levels and placed with staff facilitators who were accomplished and experienced in the PBS process. The students were asked questions about the existing implementation of PBS at the school and they offered insightful comments and suggestions from their perspective. Strategies were then incorporated into a plan for teachers and support staff. Together, students and teachers set goals to achieve the desired outcomes for the school. This process is ideal because it fosters an all-school inclusion, which PBS encourages for fidelity of implementation.

Lastly, Flannery and Sugai (2009) outlined a case study from South Lakes High School (SLHS), in Fairfax County Public Schools in Reston, Virginia. Teachers and administrators were sent to PBS training initiated by the county for all schools who wished to start PBS. As in many of the other schools studied, SLHS formed a Leadership Team that was responsible for the initial training and dispersal of information to the rest of the school. This was done on an annual basis to ensure that all teachers were up to date with the program’s information and to make certain that new teachers were able to develop a thorough understanding of the program. Most importantly, the team members attended monthly meetings with the county to elicit information on coaching and to troubleshoot common issues with implementation. The team employed a

skilled PBS coach and with the combination of staff training, reinforcement of strategies, and the professional coaching, the result was a compelling commitment from the staff. Teachers received regular instruction at faculty meetings and staff development, and subsequently disseminated the information to the students via direct instruction. All new faculty were required to attend PBS introductory training. Key in this process is that both staff and students received positive reinforcement for their work in this.

Challenges and the Social Validity of PBS

Although the PBS program has well-defined parameters there are many challenges that teachers can potentially face during implementation. Training, staff development, and monitoring notwithstanding, teachers often find it difficult to maintain the protocol with integrity. Chitiyo and Wheeler (2009) studied a lower socioeconomic school district in Southern Illinois, wherein 40 teachers were surveyed regarding the implementation of PBS and slightly over half responded. The 21 teachers who completed the survey conveyed having difficulty with finding the time to record behavioral data, which is key to the success of the program. The teachers also commented that the assigned paperwork was repetitive and arduous, and attributed the reduced success of the program to the fact that there was not a clearly defined system at their schools to attend to behavioral violations. The lack of effective communication between staff and administration was also mentioned as a concern. It is noteworthy that the teachers who responded were having difficulties assimilating the PBS data, which could possibly be the reason why they completed the survey and the other 19 teachers did not take the time to do so. Conversely, the 19 teachers who did not respond may have felt as if they were too overburdened

with work to find the time. Effective staff development is essential to prepare teachers and staff for appropriate implementation of PBS as well as to follow up on potential problems.

Wolf (1978) proposed the term social validity to indicate the value that society places on a product, or in this case, a program such as PBS. Wolf elucidated that for a program to have legitimate worth, its effectiveness must be evaluated concerning the program's stated goals and expected outcomes. Miramontes, Marchant, Heath, and Fischer (2011) stated the importance of social validity in a program such as PBS. These researchers mentioned that public educators might be overwhelmed with plans, strategies, and implementation and have no assurance of success. PBS must be implemented with fidelity, full stakeholder loyalty, and all-school participation. Miramontes et al. (2011) also stated that the potential concern for schools is the disparity between published research and actual practice. In this case, schools need to attend to their due diligence and investigate the problems local schools have had with implementation, staff development, appropriate interventions, and student needs. Teacher satisfaction with the program is key for the schools to have the successful outcomes to give the program social validity.

Frey, Park, Browne-Ferrigno, and Korfhage (2010) also questioned the social validity of PBS. The authors examined the program in the context of early childhood programs—including Head Start/Early Head Start/Child Care and Pre-Kindergarten—through focus groups and interviews with management and teachers in a city in the Midwest. This was a large study that included 5,000 children in about 250 classrooms, from which they randomly sampled 50 classrooms and conducted eight focus groups. The teachers that participated in the study formed a leadership team and created a program logo to convey efficacy. Teachers received sufficient resources and instruction to teach the PBS curriculum to the children. Leadership committees

met regularly and brainstormed solutions to problems, as well as planned for the future of the program. However, teachers felt that there was not adequate support for the focus groups. Frey et al. (2010) indicated that social validity “addresses consumers’ perceptions of the goals, procedures and outcomes of an intervention” (p. 224). In addition to the leadership teams and extensive instruction (staff development) for implementation, the researchers worked to ensure fidelity of the program and conducted extensive data collection to achieve the goal of improving classroom quality and behavior.

Discussion

The literature is somewhat lacking regarding important facets of particular disciplinary issues. Sugai et al. (2000) stated that teachers should set goals for the students for behavior, yet there did not appear to be sufficient information about this in the literature. Additionally, while there is research attending to teachers and students collaborating and setting academic goals for better test scores or semester grades, the information available regarding behavioral goals is deficient. There is a need for more information on behavioral plans and goal setting with a specific focus on expectations for student behavior and conduct. This would be particularly helpful for those seeking guidance regarding the second and third tiers of PBS. My research provides a case study at Fitzpatrick Middle School; the goal of this is to fill a gap in the research by examining student and teacher perceptions of how PBS affects learning and classroom culture.

Conclusion

The review of the literature revealed many forms of disciplinary action in school—from zero tolerance resulting in removal from the classroom setting to positive reinforcement and educating students within the realm of good manners and appropriate behavior. Many school

administrators in schools deluged with behavioral problems feel that the implementation of zero tolerance is a sine qua non for the achievement of discipline and safety which promotes an effective academic environment. They utilize metal detectors, police presence, and unauthorized locker searches, and this creates an atmosphere of fear (Noguera, 1995). This policy results in increased separation from the classroom as students are suspended or expelled (Arcia, 2006). Ultimately, the students miss much of the classroom instruction and the result is often a situation where students drop out of school and in the worst cases, end up in prison or juvenile correctional facilities (Balfanz et al., 2003).

After reviewing literature that espouses the value of programming that emphasizes rewarding the positive behavior of students rather than concentrating on the punitive measures, PBS stands as a worthwhile program for schools to create a beneficial learning environment and positive classroom culture. Although PBS is data driven with quantitative documentation from “tardies” and rule violations, it is the qualitative evidence elicited from students, staff, and administrators that is most telling: improvement in student behavior, academic achievement, and classroom culture (Sugai et al., 2000). Noting the research data summarized in Table 2.1, optimal classroom environment interventions are an integral part of the PBS program (Emmer et al., 2003). Additionally, a significant component of PBS is the acknowledgement of appropriate behavior in a structured and organized fashion (Bohanon et al., 2009; McKevitt & Braaksma, 2007). This is important as it helps teachers maintain meaningful relationships with students (Marzano et al., 2003) and because students know that particular behaviors will elicit positive reinforcement. Several researchers outlined the importance of teaching and reinforcing expectations of students for discipline and classroom behavior (Bohanon et al., 2009; Horner et

al., 2005; Sharpe et al., 1995). This is essential for a healthy classroom culture and an important part of the PBS program.

Another facet of PBS is to focus on prevention rather than reaction; this results from teachers effectively and regularly communicating expectations to the students (Emmer & Stough, 2001; Osher et al., 2010; Sugai & Horner, 2002). When students understand what is expected of them, the time wasted on disciplinary action is reduced and there is more time for instruction. Teaching a child social skills is more impactful when a teacher has cultivated a quality relationship with his or her students (Marzano et al., 2003). Students learn the lifelong social skills that can potentially enable them to be better citizens. This social curriculum is taught and reinforced much in the same way that a math lesson or social studies project comprises a child's education (Emmer & Stough, 2001; Sugai & Horner, 2002). Sugai et al. (2011) indicated that cultural factors should be considered when disciplining children. Cultural considerations are discussed in many facets of the literature, but appropriate disciplinary techniques within the framework of culture are somewhat lacking.

The following chapter discusses the methods that were used to compile the data from teachers and students at Fitzpatrick Middle School. This includes a self-assessment survey that I utilized to formulate and compile appropriate questions for the teacher interviews. The qualitative methods include student and teacher interviews, as well as follow up member checking via additional questioning to clarify and confirm answers in the interviews. The interviews were ultimately transcribed and analyzed for findings.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine how PBS was implemented in Fitzpatrick Middle School, located in the Midwest, and how this implementation affected classroom culture, office detention referrals, and achievement. Ultimately, this study examined the parameters for optimal implementation for PBS at this school, and what students and staff indicated as being problematic. The students were questioned about the teachers' consistency regarding discipline, and how they felt about the staff following through on disciplinary procedures—such as signatures and reward coupon distribution. Students gave their opinions on what made a good classroom environment for learning and how well the behavioral rules were communicated to them to achieve a good classroom environment. Teachers spoke of their own concerns for PBS implementation, including the lack of staff development, their feelings that students do not understand the behavioral expectations, and how there is very little consistency throughout the school.

As stated in Chapter 1, the following research questions were used to guide this study:

1. How is the Positive Behavioral Support (PBS) program represented in the classrooms of this Fitzpatrick Middle School? How are support staff and teachers implementing PBS? What is being communicated to students regarding the social curriculum and classroom expectations?
2. What are the teachers' attitudes and perspectives toward classroom culture in this Fitzpatrick Middle School?

3. What do the teachers understand regarding the implementation of PBS within the classroom setting?

Student participant selection was generated from school and Wayne County RESA data on office detention referrals (ODR) from grades 6 to 8. Permission to use these data was obtained from the assistant principal of the school and the director of Wayne County RESA PBS. Permission was granted from the superintendent of schools to conduct this research at the indicated middle school.

Research Design

This research was conducted primarily utilizing a qualitative paradigm. The research started after Internal Review Board (IRB) approval was received in May, 2016 and concluded June 13, 2016, with several instances of member checking through January, 2017. This case study used a variety of qualitative measures to determine how PBS impacts classroom climate and achievement and explored the factors that will promote optimal implementation. The methodology included student interviews (see Appendix A), survey data from 8th grade teachers and support staff at the middle school (see Appendix B), and interviews with teachers and support staff (see Appendix C).

Site and Participants

Student data and participation were elicited from the school and Wayne County RESA office detention referrals (ODR) from grades 6 to 8. The site of the study was an affluent suburban middle school where the researcher works as a teacher. There was a total of approximately 585 students at this school who attended grades 6–8. During the time that data was collected, 80% of the students were Caucasian and 20% of the students were African American. Of the 585 students, 200 children were in the 8th grade and these students comprised

the eligible population for the study. Permission was granted from the superintendent of schools to conduct this research at the indicated middle school.

The participants in the study were the 8th graders and the teachers/support staff who taught 8th grade at this middle school. The primary purpose for studying the 8th graders rather than the lower grade level students was that they have been at the middle school for three years, indicating a minimum of three years of exposure to classrooms implementing PBS. PBS was funded by a grant from Wayne County RESA and the data from the school's office detention referrals was reported quarterly to Wayne County RESA for the purpose of fulfilling the grant requirements. The funding given to schools to implement PBS is contingent upon the schools providing the county behavioral data to track improvement. This behavioral data was not relevant to FERPA because the office detention referrals were in no way associated with any student academic or behavioral records at Fitzpatrick Middle School. The data utilized from Wayne County RESA offered a representative selection of participants. The 8th graders were represented via many factors, including those students whose behavior had deteriorated in some manner over the three-year period (indicated by an increase in recorded office detention referrals). The primary selection pool for participants was drawn from children whose office detention referrals had increased from 6th grade to 7th grade. Additionally, the inclusion criteria for the selection of participants were as follows:

- Male students with an increase in ODRs from 6th grade to 8th grade
- Female students with an increase in ODRs from 6th grade to 8th grade
- African American students with an increase in ODRs from 6th to 8th grade
- Students participating in the Free Lunch program with an increase in ODRs from 6th to 8th grade

Seventeen teachers and support staff taught or assisted in teaching the 8th graders, including eight core teachers (math, English, social studies, and science) as well as nine elective and special education teachers, counselors and classroom aides. All full time 8th grade teachers and support staff were invited to participate in the study. They were informed about the study protocols, including the surveys and the interview process (see Appendix D: Teacher/Support Staff Informed Consent).

Students and their parents were provided with the appropriate assent and parental permission forms outlining the study and informing them that participation would be voluntary and there would be no consequences for non-participation (see Appendix E and Appendix F). It was communicated to students and staff that they would be able to drop out of the study at any time and for any reason. As children might sense an intimidating power dynamic when an adult teacher interviews them, I was careful to monitor my interactions so as to minimize influencing student participants, maintained a nonjudgmental demeanor, and took the time to ensure that the students felt comfortable talking to me before beginning the interviews. Participating students were also informed that their comments would remain confidential and in no way affected any of their grades at school.

Data Collection

The data collected for this study included: a) ODR information, b) teacher/support staff surveys, c) teacher/support staff interviews, and d) student interviews. ODR data was provided by Wayne County RESA via grant information. This information was accessible to the school administration, and all members of the PBS committee, including myself. The data was in no way associated with individual students' behavioral or academic records. These data provided behavioral information that tracked the students from 6th–8th grade for the purpose of selecting

the students who were invited to participate in the study. All 8th grade students from Fitzpatrick Middle School who had an increased number of ODR's from 6th to 8th grades, who were willing to participate in the study were accepted, for a total of eleven students. The PBS data indicated how many years the students had attended Fitzpatrick Middle School (and therefore participated in the PBS program) and illustrated the increase or decrease of office detention referrals, both by group (the entire 8th grade) and using certain variables such as gender or if the student received special education services. IRB approval was sought and obtained for all assent and consent forms and data collection instruments.

Teacher and support staff surveys were used to provide information for the interview process to answer the research questions. The survey addressed current implementation of PBS and teachers' perceptions of the multi-faceted process—including a clear understanding of classroom expectations, rewards, appropriate staff development, and general opinion of the PBS program. The answers were clarified and elaborated on during the interview process in order to provide additional input regarding teachers' needs and perceptions of classroom culture.

Individual student interviews were conducted to elicit information about student behavior. This included questions to clarify if students understood the behavioral expectations and whether they could elucidate those expectations. Additionally, the interviews helped me gather information on the students' understanding of the program and their knowledge of individual rewards and consequences. Finally, the interviews enabled me to determine if students truly understood appropriate behavioral guidelines, which included following the social curriculum directives laid out in the PBS expectations.

Procedures

After receiving the discipline data from Wayne County RESA (indicating increase or decrease in office detention referrals), I selected the student population and invited them to take part in my study. I obtained consent and assent forms and interviewed individual students. The 8th grade teachers and support staff were also invited to participate and began by filling out the survey. Subsequently, the interview process was initiated for the individual teachers and support staff who elected to be included in the study.

Interview protocol: Students. Interviews were conducted with individual students during the lunch period or during the advisory/homeroom period, and each interview was limited to a total of fifteen minutes, with an average interview length of eleven minutes. Students were interviewed privately in a classroom with the door closed and locked to ensure no interruptions and confidentiality with their responses. A “Do Not Disturb” sign was put on the door and this measure was effective throughout the interviewing process. Students were informed that they were going to be asked a series of questions about themselves and about PBS. I requested that they provide answers as honestly as possible so that the research would be helpful for the implementation of PBS. They were reminded that their names would not be used or divulged, and that only a code in the data collected would identify them. They were told that their answers would be recorded with a digital voice recorder, as well as with an iPhone 6S voice memo during the session for back up. I opted to take no notes during the interviews so that I could give my full attention to the students. I indicated the student code before the start of the interview and was very cautious not to call any student by name during the interviews. The interview questions are listed in Appendix A. If at any point the student hesitated in answering a question, I repeated the question and asked if they need any clarification. Member checks were conducted throughout the

interview process by restating questions and seeking clarifications. I also periodically reminded them that their answers would be kept confidential. The digital recordings were password protected and kept in a locked file cabinet accessible only to the researcher. Upon completion of the dissertation, all voice recordings will be deleted.

Teacher/support staff survey. Teacher/Support Staff surveys were delivered individually to the respective classrooms. Surveys were distributed on a Thursday with a request that they be returned by Monday. Teachers and support staff were assigned codes to be used for the survey and the interview to protect their identities. All surveys remain locked in a secure file cabinet until the dissertation study is complete and will ultimately be destroyed. Teachers and staff were offered a gift card as a token of thanks for their time and participation in the study. A few teachers declined receiving gift cards, stating that they wished to help and did not require any token of thanks.

Interview protocol: Teachers. Interviews with individual teachers were conducted before or after school or during the teacher's planning period, and each interview was limited to a total of 30 minutes. The interviews took place after the surveys had been returned. Teachers were interviewed privately and in their own classrooms so that they were comfortable with the environment. A "Do Not Disturb" sign was placed on the door and the door was closed and locked to prevent interruptions and to ensure that responses to questions would be kept private and confidential. Teachers were apprised of the interview protocol and told they were going to be asked a series of questions about themselves and about their implementation of PBS. I requested that they respond in a candid and straightforward manner, assuring them of anonymity and confidentiality. They were informed that their names would not be used and that they would be identified only by a code within the data. These participants confirmed their understanding that a

digital voice recorder, as well as the voice memo application on the iPhone 6S would record their responses. The questions for the interviews are listed in Appendix C and were based on the survey responses. If teachers or support staff hesitated on a question, I encouraged them to take their time, restated the question, and asked if they needed any clarification. I periodically reminded them that their answers would be kept confidential. I documented the code that identified the teacher before starting the recording and was cautious not to refer to them by name during the recording. The digital recorder was kept in a locked office and the audio files of the interviews were stored on a password-protected computer.

Data Analysis

I utilized the Wayne County RESA data to select participants for my study. I first considered all students who had attended Fitzpatrick Middle School for three years who had displayed an increase in ODRs. I interviewed all of the students who agreed to participate in the study, for a total of 11. This generalized category included population segments that included African American students and students from lower socioeconomic statuses (identified as those receiving Free Lunch services). There were no students who received special education services in the study; no student who received special education services or services for emotional impairment had 7th grade behavioral data that qualified them to be interviewed. Within the aforementioned categories, I analyzed the percentage of the general population each of the minority segments represented and determined if any of these population segments were disproportionately represented within the ODR data. I examined trends and patterns within these referrals. I interviewed only the students who responded to my invitation, so the total population was not entirely represented.

Survey data. Teacher data was elicited from a dichotomous survey. Teachers responded to questions about their perceptions of PBS and the way in which it was implemented at their middle school. They reported which factors within the school were currently in place or not in place as expected. These factors pertained to appropriate PBS implementation, staff development, student education, behavioral guidelines and more.

Interview data. I manually transcribed all teacher interviews into separate Microsoft Word documents and began careful analysis of emerging patterns, trends, and commonalities. After all of the teacher interviews were transcribed, codes and themes were identified. I read through the interviews and identified commonalities. I developed codes and patterns on the basis of emerging information through an inductive process, rather than pre-determining my codes to fit into my research questions. I targeted themes such as issues with communication of behavioral expectations and appropriate implementation of PBS to create a positive classroom culture. I implemented triangulation and member checking of the teacher interview data to facilitate cross verification from my sources. After coding individual teacher interviews, I crosschecked themes via other interviews for validity. After initial coding (first cycle), I coded across all teacher interviews to triangulate the data and create second coding data. To ensure accurate and authentic interpretation of interviews, I also conducted member checks.

After the students' interviews were transcribed, I read through the interviews and noted identifying commonalities. I subsequently began initial coding and the creation of categories. I developed codes for commonalities—with particular focus on those students whose behavior patterns have declined—to ultimately triangulate data with teacher interview themes in order to identify the problems in PBS implementation. For those students who had had an increase in ODR's, I acknowledged patterns on the basis of emerging information to find common themes

that helped me to answer my research questions. I targeted themes such as issues with communication of behavioral expectations and appropriate implementation of PBS to create a positive classroom culture. I initiated member checking to ensure that my data was valid, reinforcing the student responses and confirming my themes.

After all teacher and student interviews were transcribed, coded and member checked, I triangulated the student and teacher interview data for final axial coding to confirm my themes and acknowledge codes that reflected commonalities. As mentioned, new themes, interpretation, and understanding were expected to evolve when I did my final axial coding. Patton (2002) remarked, “Interpretation means attaching significance to what was found, making sense of the findings, offering explanations drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, considering meanings, and otherwise imposing order” (p. 480). This was my biggest challenge in finalizing my research analysis. The ultimate goal of this process was to help this middle school get on track for PBS implementation with fidelity and to have an optimal school and classroom culture.

Potential Ethical Issues

Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtler (2010) indicated that the researcher should address the following questions:

- Is there a clear connection between the data and the associated findings?
- Are the conclusions and themes supported by the data?
- Is the researcher bias kept to a minimum?

All research is potentially subject to bias, but I navigated this problem by demonstrating evidence of all findings via documentation in the interview transcripts. The direct quotes from

students and staff support any claims made in the conclusion of the study. Additionally, the use of standardized questions helped to eliminate bias.

IRB consideration included careful measures to protect potentially vulnerable participants for this project because it included middle school children who were being questioned and studied. These students were minors and it was imperative that the students and parents were informed that participation in this study would in no way impact their grade. Parental consent forms were acquired for student participation (see Appendix F) and in order to protect the identity and confidentiality of all participants, every student and their respective responses remained anonymous. Students who elected to be included in the study completed a Student Assent Form (see Appendix E). Students had a code for identification to keep their identity confidential. All data remained locked up and the laptop computer upon which the digital files were stored was password protected. The superintendent of schools was informed and after the study was outlined and presented to him, a letter of support reflecting the school's participation in the study was obtained.

Positionality. An important issue to consider in the course of this research was that I was not only a teacher in this school, I also taught the students who participated in the study. For this reason, it was stressed and clearly articulated to each student that participation in this study would not affect either the student's grade or my relationship with the student if he or she refused to participate. Likewise, all teachers and support staff were approached in a non-threatening manner, with assurances given that their identity would remain confidential and data would be kept secure. I have been invested in PBS for the seven years it has been implemented in my school. Another consideration is that I had pre-conceived notions of what constituted good implementation that I was careful not to allow to bias my work. I minimized this bias by

objectively regarding each teacher's viewpoints toward PBS with impartiality and open-mindedness that was maintained and carefully monitored through the use of a research journal.

Conclusion

Students were interviewed in a controlled and private setting, with no interruptions and in a classroom where they felt comfortable and safe. These interviews were followed up by questions at school and via email. Students were eager to offer their opinions and appeared to be forthright and honest with their answers. Teachers completed the self-assessment surveys, where they could indicate their opinions about what components of PBS were in place or not in place within the school. They were interviewed about implementation, consistency, and teaching the social curriculum. Interviews were conducted in a private classroom setting and all teachers willingly met to be interviewed. The information given by students and teachers was confirmed in additional questioning and emails. The findings from this data, as well as the actual data, are reported in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings

This chapter presents the findings from researching the PBS program in Fitzpatrick Middle School in the Midwest via 8th grade students and their teachers. The purpose of this study was to examine how PBS was implemented in this middle school and how this implementation affected classroom culture, office detention referrals, and achievement.

The research questions that were addressed are as follows:

- How is the PBS program represented in the classrooms of this suburban Midwest school? How are support staff and teachers implementing PBS? What is being communicated to students regarding the social curriculum and classroom expectations?
- What are the teachers' attitudes and perspectives toward classroom culture in this suburban Midwest school?
- What do the teachers understand regarding the implementation of PBS within the classroom setting?

The main findings of this study are: (a) although students claimed to understand the behavioral expectations, infractions did not abate, (b) the students perceived that the teachers' inconsistencies impacted the fidelity of PBS and the protocol for discipline, (c) the teachers indicated that they were not consistent with communicating or implementing the PBS Behavioral Expectations and reward protocol, and (d) there was insufficient instruction and education for students on the Behavioral Expectations and the Social Curriculum.

This chapter is divided into the three following sections: (a) PBS protocol in place at the middle school; (b) student and teacher profiles, including background information for teachers based on a self-assessment survey; and (c) key findings.

PBS Protocol at Fitzpatrick Middle School

To fully understand how PBS is facilitated in this middle school, the expectations for implementation should be elucidated in order to clarify the data and provide a clear understanding of the findings, as well as comments from students and teachers. The implementation of PBS is comprised of many layers, including how teachers and administrators interpret the program, the county guidelines, and the analysis of school data. This section outlines procedures of PBS at this middle school to provide better understanding of the data that follows. Note in Figure 4.1 below, the school's PBS Expectation Matrix that is posted throughout the school for reference. The middle school's PBS Executive Committee used feedback and suggestions from the staff, as well as research from other schools, to create a series of PBS Expectations for designated areas of the school. Classroom, bathroom, library, cafeteria, hallway and locker room guidelines were outlined and informational posters with this information were created (Figure 4.1). These posters are displayed prominently in the aforementioned areas, as well as in the auditorium, counseling center, main office, and entranceways to the school. The expectations reflect basic good manners and the cornerstone of the social curriculum.

Expectations Matrix

Expectations Matrix						
	Classrooms	Bathrooms	Library	Cafeteria	Before and After School	Hallways
Be Respectful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen when others are speaking • Speak when it is your turn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep area clean • Respect others' privacy • Go to the nearest restroom and take the shortest path 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use library for appropriate reasons • Treat property and equipment with respect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use good manners • Listen to adults 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove all hats at door • Turn off and store all electronics at door 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep moving and stay to the right • Be considerate of your locker neighbors
Be Responsible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow all staff directions the first time they are given • Be on time • Come to class prepared 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use during passing time and lunch • Report graffiti, damage, or disturbances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry planner • Return materials on time/pay fines • Push chairs in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep the line moving and have ID ready • Clean up after yourself • Keep food and drink in cafeteria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go directly to your destination • Be on time and leave promptly • Use main entrance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use passing time wisely • Keep walking while you are talking
Be Careful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use materials as directed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wash hands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay in assigned seat as directed • Follow district's "Acceptable Use Policy" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep hands, feet, food and objects to self • Walk calmly • Line up in an orderly fashion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay on sidewalk and use crosswalk • School rules apply to bus and bus stop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walk calmly • Close and lock lockers appropriately
Always	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow adult direction • Keep hands, feet, and objects to self • Report problems to staff • Use appropriate volume, tone, and language • Respect others' personal space and belongings 					

Figure 4.1. PBS Expectations Matrix

In addition to having the posters for reference, all students are given a daily planner. The planner contains a calendar section to record class agenda items and homework, as well as a reference section in the back with maps, formulas, and a brief description of the PBS expectations. Note that students are required to have their planners with them at all times while traveling in the halls to the restroom, the office, to the counselor or social worker, or to another classroom during class time. The daily planner contains a quarterly signature sheet upon which transgressions are recorded and documented via teacher signatures (see Figure 4.2). The codes for the transgressions are also listed and reference the expectations, although not specifically worded as such. For instance, planner code “A,” refers to disruptive hallway behavior and encompasses the expectations detailed on the poster in the hallways. These include student expectations such as using passing time wisely, being considerate of locker neighbors, and walking calmly. If students do not follow these rules, they receive a signature. The planner layout and organization, as well as the signature codes, are specific to this school and were created by the administrators who instituted PBS in 2010. The PBS Committee recently revised the planner codes for clarity. For example, Code “E” was previously coded as “Insubordination” but it was discovered that most students did not understand what that word meant, so it was changed to “Disrespectful behavior/language.” Note that a teacher can sign a planner for a rule that is listed on the PBS poster and simply write in the infraction under the heading “Reason Code.” Although all of the expectations are represented in the planner codes, teachers may choose to be more specific if it is warranted by the situation. An example of this would be on the poster in the column “Before and After School,” wherein the student might run across the street when the traffic light is red and not within the crosswalk. This would be Infraction Code C (Unsafe Behavior) in the student planner. However, the teacher might feel it would be more

impactful to write that the student ran out into the street through a red light. In this case, if it happens again it will have been specifically documented the first time. Some teachers only used planner codes and others use the poster phrases and write in the actual occurrence under the heading “Reason Code.” Some teachers used the codes, but they write in infractions at other times when they deem it necessary.

Note that Infraction Code B (Breaking NBC Rule) represents “No Bodily Contact,” which includes hugging, high-fives, and any pushing or shoving. At the bottom of the PBS Expectations poster, there is a section for rules that students must always follow in all locations of the school. One of these is to “Keep hands, feet and objects to self” which is represented as “NBC” in the student planner. Students have occasionally argued with a teacher when they were given an NBC signature in the classroom because they assumed that they were only required to follow that rule in the hallways as it was originally created for the hallway expectation. Soon after PBS started at the middle school, it became readily apparent that students needed to be reminded to follow that rule in all places throughout the school. It was for that reason that the rule was included in the “Always” section of the poster.

Infraction Code K (Violation of Red Zone) refers to any student using a cell phone or other electronic device in an area where they are forbidden, such as certain classrooms, the hallways, and the bathrooms. Figure 4.2 below depicts the “First Quarter Signature Page” in the beginning of the planner. Each quarter has its own signature sheet. The maximum number of signatures for quarters two, three, and four are only seven, at which time the student is sent to the office to talk to the assistant principal. The rationale for this is that students’ behavior should be improving and the reduced number of allowable signatures makes them more aware that they

have to be mindful of their behavior. The codes do not change each quarter and they are listed on each of the signature sheets for the teachers and students to reference.

NAME: _____

Number	Date	Reason Code	Teacher Signature
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			Teacher – notify Assistant Principal

Infraction Codes

A. Disruptive Hallway Behavior	H. Misuse of materials
B. Breaking NBC Rule	I. Out of seat
C. Unsafe Behavior	J. Off task
D. Unprepared for class (materials)	K. Violation of Red Zone
E. Disrespectful behavior/language	T. Tardy
F. Disruptive to learning	
G. Talking in class	

This is your signature card. At any time there is a minor disciplinary infraction, a teacher or adult supervisor will ask you for this signature card. The card will be dated and signed by the adult who witnessed the infraction. The tenth signature guarantees a one hour detention. You are expected to leave this card in the planner at all times. If a teacher or adult supervisor asks for this card, and you do not have it, you will automatically be assigned a detention. If you lose this card you may get a new one from the office. Replacement cards will have five signatures filled in. Each time a signature card is lost, you will be assigned a detention.

Figure 4.2. First Quarter Signature Page in Student Planner

When a teacher observes a student who is misbehaving, it is at that teacher's discretion whether the planner gets signed or the student gets a warning. Signatures are implemented to have a record of students' infractions for teachers and administration to document behavioral data and in compliance with funding requirements. This information is sent to the county annually to provide data to fulfill funding requirements. In other words, if the school does not provide documentation of infractions, the county can consider that they are not invested in the program and stop funding. Although these data were not documented as part of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) or any school academic or behavioral record, the data were recorded for funding and to note any increases and decreases in particular infractions, such as student tardiness.

A teacher signing the final signature in the planner will send the student down to the office to meet with the assistant principal per the instructions on the signature sheet. The student will meet with the assistant principal to discuss behavior and be assigned a detention. If the student does not show up for that assigned after-school detention, he or she would be given a Friday detention. If the student misses the Friday detention, he or she would be required to do an in-school suspension (ISS) assigned by the assistant principal. During an ISS the student must stay in a room in the back of the main office to work on homework or read alone. The student is not allowed to go to lunch with the other students. He or she is escorted to the cafeteria before the scheduled lunch time and bring his or her lunch back to the office. At the end of the day, the student leaves school at the scheduled time with all of the other students.

There are two other circumstances regarding signatures that should be clarified.

1. Any student who does not have his or her planner when a teacher asks to sign it must go to the office for a "temporary planner," and will get assigned an automatic

detention. Students must return the temporary planner to the office the next day for proper documentation of accrued signatures for that day.

2. When a student reaches the maximum signatures for a detention, the student receives an “orange card” with a place for five signatures, which gets stapled in the student’s planner. When the orange card is filled with the five signatures, the process repeats, and the student goes down to the office for a meeting with the assistant principal to be assigned another detention. Note that there is no longer a protocol in place for repeated detentions and that is part of the process that adds to the inconsistent nature of the program. Some students are assigned an ISS after a requisite number of filled “orange cards” and some are not. This depends on whatever factors the assistant principal takes into consideration and these factors are not documented.

As PBS stands for positive behavioral support it is critical to have a plan in place to emphasize and reward the positive behavior of students. At this middle school, students are presented with reward coupons from teachers, support staff, hall monitors, and administrators. Students accrue coupons and are able to visit the PBS store on Thursdays at lunchtime to redeem them for gifts and treats. The coupons are printed in the office and distributed to all teachers and staff members, who disburse them to students for recognition of good behavior.

Again, coupon distribution is arbitrary and in accordance with what the individual staff member might define as good behavior. For instance, many staff members expect that the students should always demonstrate courtesy, propriety, and respect and therefore they do not reward students for displaying appropriate behavior but only for exceeding expectations. Other staff members are less judicious and will dole out coupons generously. This will be elucidated

later in this chapter, but note some basic guidelines that are given to teachers for awarding a coupon:

- “Daily Spot Checks” by the teacher for any student who arrives to class on time, brings all necessary materials and texts into the classroom, and has homework completed on a particular day.
- If a student offers support with the daily lesson to a classmate, or helps another student during group work without being asked to do so.
- If a student assists another student in the hall when needed, such as getting a locker open, picking up dropped books, or advocating for a peer in a situation where there was bullying.
- If a child volunteers to work in a group with a student with special needs or help a student with special needs with a class assignment without being ordered to do so.
- When a teacher is facilitating a lesson on the Smart Board and a student offers to go up and demonstrate practice problems for the class.

The school policy is to have a 4:1 ratio of four positive (reward coupons) to one negative (planner signatures to acknowledge rule transgressions). Simply put, if a teacher has signed nine student planners in a given week, that teacher should have also distributed at least 36 reward coupons to various students. This policy was initiated to ensure that the focus of behavior is positive and that the students notice that positive behavior is being noted, recognized, and rewarded. The teacher can set the goal as weekly, monthly, or even by the end of the report card marking. The teacher is encouraged to get into the habit of noting the students’ positive behaviors rather than spending the majority of their classroom management correcting negative behaviors. The goal of this program is to highlight and encourage positive behavior.

Student and Teacher Profiles

Student profiles. Eleven 8th grade students who were enrolled in Fitzpatrick Middle School were interviewed about the Positive Behavioral Support (PBS) program at their school. The students were selected based on behavioral data published and released by the county, indicating that these children had multiple office detention referrals (ODRs) in their 7th grade year. All 11 students had attended this school for three years and had participated in the PBS program for all three years. Seven males and four females participated. Of these 11 children, two were African American, two of the students had grandparent guardians, and three of the children participated in the Free Lunch program.

The students' information listed below was accurate for the time period of the interviews during the students' 8th grade year:

- Billy² is male, Caucasian, and lived with his grandparents.
- Carl is male, African-American, and lived with his parents.
- Eric is male, Caucasian, lived with his grandmother, and was in the Free Lunch program
- Erin is female, Caucasian, and lived with her parents
- Jack is male, Caucasian, and split his time between his parents' homes due to a recent divorce
- John is Caucasian, lived with his mother, and was in the Free Lunch program
- Josie is female, mixed race, lived with her mother and stepfather, and was in the Free Lunch program

² All students and teachers were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identities.

- Laurie is female, Caucasian, and lived with her parents
- Matthew is male, Caucasian, and lived with his parents
- Sarah is female, African-American, and lived with her mother
- Walter is male, Caucasian, and has lived with his father since his mother left the family earlier in middle school

Teacher profiles. All full-time 8th grade teachers at the middle school were invited to participate in this project. Three elective teachers, eight core academic teachers, one special education teacher, one guidance counselor, and one special education paraprofessional agreed to participate. Five are male and nine are female and all are Caucasian. Five of these teachers were members of the PBS Committee which was one of many committees created for school improvement to fulfill the Professional Learning Committee (PLC) requirements of the district.

The information listed below was accurate for the time period of the interviews during the students' 8th grade year, which was the same time period that the educators were interviewed:

- Ms. Allison is a female special education teacher
- Ms. Annaliese is a female guidance counselor and member of the PBS Committee at the middle school
- Mr. Benjamin is a male science teacher
- Mr. Brendan is a male social studies teacher
- Mr. Bruce is a male special education paraprofessional
- Ms. Corinne is a female core honors social studies teacher and member of the PBS Committee at the middle school

- Ms. Danielle is a female science and honors science teacher and member of the PBS Committee at the middle school
- Ms. Gabrielle is a female English teacher and member of the PBS Committee at the middle school
- Ms. Holly is a female music teacher
- Mr. Joseph is a male orchestra teacher
- Ms. Madison is a female Broadcast Journalism teacher
- Ms. Martine is a female French teacher and member of the PBS Committee at the middle school
- Mr. Pete is a male Academic Assistance teacher
- Ms. Sandra is a female English and honors English teacher

Note Table 4.1, which shows a summary of Teacher Profiles:

Table 4.1

Teacher Profile Summary

TEACHER	GENDER	CLASS(ES)	PBS COMMITTEE MEMBER	PBS TRAINING IN 2010
Ms. Holly	F	Choir Advisory		✓
Mr. Brendan	M	Social Studies Advisory		✓
Mr. Pete	M	Academic Assistance Advisory		✓
Ms. Martine	F	French Advisory	✓	
Ms. Danielle	F	Science Honors Science Advisory	✓	✓

Mr. Joseph	M	Orchestra Advisory		✓
Ms. Allison	F	Special Education Advisory		✓
Ms. Sandra	F	English Honors English Advisory		✓
Ms. Gabrielle	F	English Advisory	✓	✓
Ms. Madison	F	Broadcast Journalism Advisory		✓
Mr. Benjamin	M	Science Advisory		✓
Ms. Corinne	F	Honors Social Studies Advisory	✓	
Mr. Bruce	M	Special Education		
Ms. Annaliese	F	Guidance Counselor	✓	✓

Eleven teachers, the guidance counselor and the paraprofessional completed the “Self-Assessment Survey,” which included questions that focused on troubleshooting problems within the PBS program implementation. Table 4.2 represents a summary of the factors that were included within the PBS program at the middle school. The teachers were instructed to indicate if they felt that the procedure was either “in place” or “not in place” within the school protocol. Almost all of the teachers agreed that the student behavioral expectations were defined both in and out of classroom situations. These expectations are listed on the posters that are displayed around the school. Nine out of the 13 teachers surveyed stated that expected student behaviors were rewarded regularly, contradicting comments given in the interviews, which will be discussed within the findings. Two of the statements revealed a disparity between what was understood regarding managing the responsibility of disciplinary issues between administration and the teachers. Eight of the 13 teachers expressed uncertainty about which problems should be

managed in the classroom versus the main office. Furthermore, about half of the teachers interviewed also indicated that they were not aware of a defined process to obtain help with problematic students. These latter two statements illustrate a lack of confidence in the role of the administrators to handle issues with student misbehavior and students who are chronic offenders. Within the PBS protocol and parameters set by the county, both of these issues need to be clearly defined for staff so the program can have authenticity and consistency. This information is addressed in the findings as well.

Table 4.2

Teacher Self-Assessment Survey

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION	In place	Not in place
Specific positive behavior expectations have been defined for all classrooms	12	1
Specific positive behavior expectations have been defined for all non-classroom settings	12	1
Expected student behaviors are taught directly by discussion, modeling, practice, and feedback	8	5
Expected student behaviors are rewarded regularly in classrooms	9	4
Expected student behaviors are rewarded regularly in non-classroom settings	9	4
Problem behaviors are defined clearly for both staff and students	10	3
Consequences for problem behaviors are defined clearly for both staff and students	8	5
Distinctions between office vs. classroom managed problems are clear to staff and students	5	8
Staff members actively supervise students in non-classroom settings	11	2

Transitions (between classes, in hallways, and in non-classroom areas) are planned, taught to students and are orderly	5	8
A simple process exists for teachers to request and receive assistance for individual students with more significant problem behaviors.	6	7

Note that two of the four PBS Committee members who completed the PBS Self-Assessment stated that all of these items were “in place.” Two of the members, Ms. Martine and Ms. Gabrielle, indicated that the two items that were regulated by administration were not in place. As mentioned, these were in regard to how certain disciplinary problems should be managed in the classroom versus the main office and whether there was a defined process to get help with problematic students. Ms. Gabrielle also mentioned many other items that she felt were not in place, such as how the expected student behaviors were not taught for either classroom or non-classroom settings, how students were not rewarded regularly, how consequences were not defined clearly, or how transitions were not planned or orderly.

Table 4.3 (below) indicates the responses from the teachers when they were asked to list the locations within the school that were susceptible to problem behavior. Teachers could list as many areas as they wished and there initially appeared to be no pattern to their responses. However, their answers often focused on either a particular situation or their own room location in the school. The hallways appeared to be the biggest problem areas and this could be attributed to the fact that there were no hall monitors regularly supervising the school before or after classes or at the lunch periods. Teachers were instructed to oversee their own hallway at the onset of their planning period, but the teachers were often too busy to follow through with this request and students may have behaved chaotically and inappropriately because there were no adults around. Students were especially disruptive during lunch period, when they were required to eat their lunch in the cafeteria and then go outside. Instead of staying in the cafeteria, students

left the area and were often seen wandering the halls during lunch disrupting classes and talking loudly when teachers were trying to either get work done or teach class. It can be noted that only one person cited the lunchroom as an area of concern. This was likely because only one staff member, the guidance counselor, was ever actually in the lunchroom during the 8th graders' lunch. She was aware of the problems there because she regularly volunteered during lunch to supervise the students and help the custodians with the clean-up tasks. The teachers did not go into the lunchroom during 8th grade lunch, so they had no idea if it was a potential problem area. The teachers whose rooms were close to the bathrooms cited the bathrooms as areas of trouble. Several teachers stayed after school on a daily basis to do work, and those were the ones who noted that students misbehaved after school. Since many teachers departed at 3:17 p.m. when the bell rang, they had no idea of this problematic behavior. So, there was actually somewhat of a pattern to the responses.

Table 4.3

Areas Cited as Most Frequently Leading to Problem Student Behavior

Lunchroom	1
Auditorium for All-School Meetings/Assemblies	4
After School – students loitering in the hallways, loud and rowdy	5
Hallways before school begins	1
Hallways at lunch	6
Certain classes with a disruptive mix of students	3
Entrance doors after playground lunch time	1
Bathrooms between classes	1
Hallways between classes or during class periods	6

Findings

The main findings of this study are as follows:

- Although students claimed to understand the behavioral expectations, infractions did not abate
- The students perceived that teachers' inconsistencies impacted the fidelity of PBS and the protocol for discipline
- The teachers indicated that they were not consistent with communicating or implementing the PBS Behavioral Expectations and reward protocol
- There was insufficient instruction and education for students on the Behavioral Expectations and the Social Curriculum

Student perspectives. The students' interviews supported the finding that they understood the PBS expectations, yet continued to break the rules and have their planners signed. Students felt that teachers were not adhering to the PBS guidelines consistently, which caused confusion about what was expected in the classrooms.

Behavioral expectations and subsequent infractions. Students were questioned about their understandings of the PBS expectations and asked if they felt confident that they understood the PBS expectations. Although each of the students unanimously claimed to understand all behavioral expectations throughout the school, they continued to accrue signatures in their daily planners from teachers during their 8th grade year for not following the rules. Only two of the 11 students indicated that they ever looked at the PBS posters and those who did so only glanced infrequently in passing. The other nine claimed to pay no attention to the posters. Erin revealed that she already understood what behaviors were expected of her and did not need to read the poster, but mentioned that the expectations were "confusing though, because different

teachers have different ways of putting it [the rules].” She stated that, “The line is often blurred and there is not a lot of continuity in [the] classrooms.” Although the students were chosen from the data of signatures and detentions earned in their 7th grade year, these students had continued to break the rules and get signatures. The students were uncertain how many signatures they had accumulated at the time they were interviewed, which was in May in their 8th grade year. They readily listed which rules they broke most frequently to get their planners signed, although they did not know how many times they had gotten each signature. See Table 4.4 below for a summary of the students’ infractions necessitating signatures (Note: “Red Zone” is an area of the school where the use of all electronics is forbidden. The hallways and bathrooms are Red Zones, as are many classrooms, per teacher discretion).

Table 4.4

Data relating reasons given by individual students for signature

Transgression Requiring Signature	Students receiving this signature at least once
Off task	Laurie, Matthew, Sarah, Erin, Billy, Walter, Jack
Talking in class	Matthew, Sarah, Erin, Carl, Billy, Walter, John
Using a phone in a “Red Zone”	Sarah, Eric, Erin, Carl, Josie
Texting in a “Red Zone”	Laurie, Carl, Josie
Disruptive to Learning	John, Erin, Billy, Jack
Tardy	Eric, Walter, Josie
Out of seat	Jack
Disrupting the teacher’s lesson	John
Shouting answers out of turn.	John
Insubordination	Sarah

From Table 4.4 it can be determined that the students continued to receive signatures in their planners despite the fact that they understood what was expected of them behaviorally. Students discussed their signatures openly and explained which rules they broke regularly for their signatures. Note that students being off task and talking were the primary transgressions for which students received signatures in their planners. Students commented on this when they listed why they had signatures. For instance, Sarah explained why she had several signatures for talking in class and remarked, “I have a lot of friends in my classes and we act up and talk.” Billy could not recall exactly how many signatures he had accrued but said he thought it was “seventy-five or more for talking or being disruptive.” He explained, “Because I have a lot of friends in that class [Mr. Brendan’s class] so we cause a lot of problems.” Jack claimed that, “I got my signatures for talking [off task] from Ms. Sandra and Ms. Madison.” Erin explained her signatures by saying that, “In some classes there is no classroom management, so the kids take over. It gets chaotic but the teacher does nothing to correct it.” Regarding the signatures for either texting or using a phone in a “Red Zone” students had mixed comments. For instance, Carl indicated that, “They [the teachers who sign his planner] have less patience for me being on the phone because it says ‘Red Zone.’ But some teachers [have different expectations and] just don’t mind.” Josie said that most of her signatures were for her phone and she stated that, “Mr. Brendan signs for my phone and other teachers say to just put away your phone.” Sarah explained that she received signatures for insubordination because, “I argue with my teachers [when they want to sign my planner].”

Understanding the behavioral expectations. The students were asked if the information regarding behavioral expectations was communicated to them systematically and conscientiously in Advisory or if teachers taught them the behavioral guidelines when they were being corrected

for breaking the rules. The daily schedule included an Advisory period, which was a 15-minute time slot at the end of the school day and was comparable to a homeroom period. Fitzpatrick Middle School was vigilant conveying PBS information for students for the first three weeks of the year. During Advisory, the journalism classes produced segments on the schools broadcast system to organize and introduce the PBS expectations that were in the students' planners for the teachers to discuss. Students and teachers made announcements of the specific expectations that should be explored during that particular Advisory period. The Advisory teachers were instructed to discuss these expectations and rules with their students. Following through on this directive was at the teachers' discretion, because the administrators did not check the classrooms to ensure that this instruction was taking place. Unfortunately, in the past three years this practice has not been continued for various reasons; there would be some intermittent instruction, but not continual for the four days per week that the students had Advisory. Other activities interrupted the instruction, or the administrators had spontaneous "All School Meetings" or fundraising assemblies and the PBS instruction was postponed, but not revisited.

The administrators also requested that the teachers continued to discuss and reinforce these expectations throughout the school year, both in students' classes and in Advisory as was suggested by the county PBS Department in order to ensure fidelity of the program. All students were asked if they understood the behavioral expectations at school. Every student simply replied "Yes." Some of the students provided comments to validate their knowledge of the expectations. For instance, Billy commented, "Don't be disrespectful, always pay attention, don't get anyone off track and stay in your seat."

As students had continued to break rules and get signatures in their planners, I asked the students if their teachers discussed, taught, or reviewed the PBS Expectations in the classroom

during the school year. Seven students—Matthew, Sarah, Carl, Billy, Walter, Jack, and Josie—simply replied “No” to the question. Laurie, Eric, Erin, and John responded that that their teachers sometimes taught expectations. Laurie answered, “Not specifically me, but yes, they tell the class. They don’t tell us what they expect, but they correct” (Email correspondence, 2017). Eric replied, “Yes, when someone does something wrong.” Erin responded by saying that, “They teach it to us at the beginning of the year and bring it up later in the year when they [the teachers] are correcting you.” John noted that his teachers did “a little bit of teaching and a little bit of correcting.” Therefore, a few of the students revealed that sometimes they were taught expectations at the beginning of the year in advisory, but not always.

When asked again if “teachers ever tell you what behaviors they expect of you” (rather than asking the students if the teachers taught, discussed or reviewed the expectations), the same four students—Laurie, Eric, Erin, and John—confirmed their earlier answers, while Erin added that teaching good behavior is primarily done in 6th and 7th grades because “in 8th grade they expect you to know it, if not follow it.” Eric stated, “Sometimes if the class is acting up the teacher will talk to us about behavior.” Matthew, Sarah, Billy, Jack, and Josie echoed Eric’s statement, indicating that statements regarding student behavior were corrective, rather than preemptive in most cases. Matthew said that his teachers don’t explain expectations, but just say, “Don’t talk when I am talking.” When asked if teachers were instructing the class about what behaviors they expect, Jack indicated “No, but they correct us when we misbehave.” Sarah remarked, “most teachers say to stay on task and don’t talk when I am talking.” The consensus was that when somebody misbehaved during class, the remaining students were the recipients of the behavior lesson. Based on the students’ perceptions, there was no regular or systematic instruction of the PBS expectations for the 8th graders.

PBS discussion periods. Students who have acquired less than six signatures each quarter were invited to enjoy a PBS celebration at the end of that quarter. The students who earned six or more signatures were assigned to a room where they gathered to discuss behavior with teachers who had volunteered or were assigned to work with them. Only two teachers, Ms. Danielle and Mr. Pete, had participated in the PBS discussion period with some of these students. After analyzing what went amiss with their behavior during the quarter, students were required to write an essay about changing their patterns of behavior and how they acted in class. I had proctored all 11 of these students in the “essay room” during their 7th or 8th grade years and most of them complained during the discussions that there was a lack of continuity or fairness in the signature process. Comments referencing the essay room discussion were brought up during the interviews. Laurie shared, “Tell us what we need to do so we don’t get in trouble.” Laurie also remarked that teachers should just “spend a minute every day before class” to explain and reiterate the guidelines to the class. Josie revealed that she thought it would be much easier for the students “if all teachers followed the same guidelines.” During his essay discussion period John said that, “The teacher needs to be fair and not have favorite students” and he repeated these words in his interview. Erin said that she thinks she understands what is expected but “it would teach us more if they [the teachers] modeled consistency.” Students claimed to want uniformity in their classes and they did not want teachers demonstrating different practices or guidelines so they would know what to expect on a daily basis in class.

Student behavior and learning. When students were asked if they knew that the PBS Expectations were in place so students could focus on learning, all students indicated that they understood that was why the guidelines were put in place. They stated that they noticed situations where other students did not follow the expectations in class and they felt that the

disruption made it more difficult for them to focus on teacher instruction and learn. Every student remarked that it was more difficult to learn when another student was disrupting class and gave examples of what bothered them the most.

The students reported some of the behaviors that precluded them from learning. Laurie commented, “People shouting across the room and throwing things” took her off task. Carl indicated that, “Yelling in class and talking while the teacher is talking [distracts from learning]. Even if I am not listening to that student, it is disruptive because I hear them talking.” Walter’s comment was similar, saying that, “Students talking, trying to get you off task. Even when it is not to me I notice it in other places in my classroom.” Erin was quite specific about which behaviors bothered her. She remarked, “Students running around; I also get distracted when students make comments about me.” Erin clarified this by saying that one of her classmates, Nick, was scheduled in several of her classes and made comments that hindered her learning. She further explained, “He [Nick] stands up, he’s outrageous, he lies, he does not follow directions.” John replied, “Talking out of turn, coming in late, and then while they are coming in late they are fooling around.” Josie commented, “When students talk when the teacher is talking I get distracted. It is also disruptive when a teacher has to stop teaching and correct someone. Also, kids getting out of their seats, like in Mr. Brendan’s class.”

Note the summary of the comments below in Table 4.5, where students elucidated what behaviors were most disruptive to them and thwarted their learning.

Table 4.5

Students' indicators for behaviors disruptive to their learning

Talking loud	Laurie, Sarah, Carl
Others throwing things across the room	Laurie, Sarah
Teacher correcting (disciplining) other students in front of the class	Sarah, Josie, Walter
Obnoxious or outrageous behavior	Erin, Billy
Other students running around or out of their seats	Erin, Jack, Josie
Other students not following teacher's directions	Erin
Other students making loud comments about me	Erin
Others talking out of turn	Matthew, Carl, Walter, Jack, John, Josie, Eric
Others being tardy and disrupting class as they walk in late	John
Others trying to get me off task	Matthew, Erin, Walter, Jack
Talking while the teacher is talking	Carl, Jack, Matthew

Matthew, Erin, Walter and Jack noted that they did not want other students getting them off task, and although they did not directly mention it, this could have been the reason that they had accrued signatures for being off task. Carl and Matthew did not appreciate others talking out of turn, yet they had accumulated signatures for this very reason. Jack had a predominant number of signatures for being out of his seat and that is what he cited as being most disruptive to his learning.

In summary, it was noted that although students understood behavioral expectations, the infractions did not abate. Students reported understanding the behavioral expectations and volunteered specific information about hallway and individual classroom rules. Nonetheless, in spite of knowing what behaviors were expected of them, they broke rules and had their planners

signed. Students revealed that they were not getting regular instruction and reminders about the PBS expectations. Mr. Pete encapsulated the dilemma of the students who continued to accrue signatures, despite the fact that they claimed to understand what was expected of them behaviorally in school in the following statement. Note that he referred to those students who regularly get signatures as the “frequent flyers” when he said,

We would [need to] look at the numbers [of signatures] and names of the frequent flyers. What is their problem and why do they keep getting signatures and what can we do to keep them from getting signatures? It will therefore become a positive instead of negative [program] if we can show kids how to change their behavior and if they can see the merit to changing their behavior.

PBS was created to reward positive behavior, but Mr. Pete was correct in his comment about the need to assimilate the reasons behind some of the students continually accruing signatures to ensure that this is a positive-based program.

Students’ perceptions of teacher inconsistencies. Students commented that there were many inconsistencies with PBS implementation, and they could not predict what would happen regarding discipline in any classroom on a given day. Students relayed that they did not get coupons very often, but regularly received signatures. They also remarked that each teacher had disparate rules and signed planners with varying frequency, some giving warnings and others just signing for any misbehavior in class.

PBS is structured to focus on positive behavior so the school administration formulated a guideline for teachers to ensure that the students would be recognized for their good behavior more often than chastised for breaking the rules by directing them to give out four coupons to balance each time that they sign a planner. The student disclosed that they did not get

systematically rewarded for good behavior and that teachers infrequently distributed the reward coupons stipulated in the PBS program. This ratio of four (recognition of positive behavior) to one (recognition of negative behavior) was introduced when the program began at the middle school, but the teachers had not received regular follow up guidance on this practice, aside from an infrequent mention at staff meetings. During the interview process, students were questioned about receiving coupons for good behavior and signatures for their transgressions. Students were asked if they received more coupons than signatures. Without exception, they responded that they received more signatures than coupons. They were also asked, “Do you ever get reward coupons for your behavior?” Billy and Josie said that they had never received any coupons. Billy remarked, “I don’t ever get a coupon for good behavior, even when I felt I deserved it.” Josie said, “I used to but not in 8th grade. Teachers just don’t give out coupons. I don’t see any of my classmates getting them either.”

Most students indicated “sometimes” or “not often” when asked about being given PBS coupons and said nothing further. However, some students commented about situations where they received a coupon or one of their classmates did. Matthew said he noticed some of his classmates getting coupons from Mr. Bruce. I asked him about the circumstances and he responded, “There is a special needs student in one of my classes, and if you are his partner Mr. Bruce will sometimes give you a coupon for helping him and partnering with him.” Matthew said that he “sometimes got a coupon for helping someone in need of help.” Sarah remarked, “Sometimes I got a coupon for cleaning up the classroom if there is a mess or litter. I might get a coupon if I have good behavior because there is an improvement.” Erin remarked that, “The one teacher who gave out coupons mostly because [mimicking], ‘I haven’t given out coupons lately

so I will give you one.” Erin stated that the teacher she was referring to was Ms. Corinne and relayed a situation that had occurred with Ms. Corinne:

Ms. Corinne indicated that we would get coupons if we answered her questions correctly because she said she hadn’t given them [coupons] out in a long while. One girl just walked late into the classroom and guessed on an answer. Ms. Corinne said, “Oh well, you’re an angel, so here’s a coupon!” I then answered the question correctly and I did not get the coupon.... I don’t think that teachers go out of their way to give out coupons to us for, say working with a special education student or helping someone in the halls. If they happen to have one [a coupon] there, they might give one.

The remaining four students, Carl, Walter, John, and Eric claimed that they had received coupons for good behavior during their 8th grade year. Carl said he received coupons for “being respectful to a special education or Emotionally Impaired (EI) student. Mostly for specific behaviors, but occasionally just for being well-behaved.” Walter replied that he received a coupon for, “helping someone in need of help.” He continued by saying that teachers did not notice that he was doing a good job, “because they just expect that [doing a good job in school].” John replied that he might get a coupon “if someone drops something or has a problem in the hall and you help him, that is probably the most common reason to get a coupon.” Eric remarked that “only one of my teachers gave out coupons.” Like John, Eric claimed that he usually received them for “helping someone in need of help like if someone drops their books in the hallway. Or volunteering to answer a question.”

Students also felt that teachers were inconsistent in signing students’ planners. Jack remarked that he got signatures from only two of his teachers, “Ms. Madison and Ms. Gabrielle. End of the day. Fifth and 6th hours.” In response to questions about the expectations and

signatures being consistent, Jack replied, “No not really, some teachers sign more planners. They have lower tolerance and they just sign.” Billy also indicated that he received signatures from primarily one teacher (Mr. Brendan) and infrequently from one other. At the time of the interview he thought he had accumulated approximately 75 signatures thus far in his 8th grade year. When questioned about having so many signatures in one year, he responded that, “I have a lot of friends in that class [Mr. Benjamin’s] so we cause a lot of problems. I think that the teachers who sign my planner all the time are signing a lot of planners.” Josie did not know how many signatures she had thus far in 8th grade, but she revealed that she had “a fair amount [of signatures] this year.” Josie, like Billy, got her signatures from Mr. Benjamin. Josie remarked, “Mr. Benjamin gives out a lot of signatures. Our class is disruptive and Mr. Benjamin gets annoyed.” Note that Mr. Benjamin stated in his interview that, “The planner signatures is a way to remind those with negative consequences, mostly for those students who don’t follow directions. If the behavior persists, they get their planners signed and that is how I do it.”

Eric remarked that he thought he had received approximately 10 signatures so far that year, down from almost 75 in 7th grade. Ms. Annaliese was questioned about this significant discrepancy in signatures. She attributed it to two factors:

There are two reasons his signatures significantly lessened: his grandma got involved and did something, whereas his mother never did anything. Even more so he did not have Ms. Krista [pseudonym for his 7th grade social studies teacher, who gave him all of his signatures] as a teacher any longer! (Email correspondence, 2017)

Regarding signatures, Eric also mentioned that “some teachers do sign more; it is the combination of the kids in the class.” Matthew remarked that, “I feel like some teachers

definitely do give more signatures than others. However, I can admit that I acted up more in those classes that my planner was signed in” (E-Mail correspondence, 2017).

Carl indicated that he felt that the expectations were not the same in all of his classes. He stated that, “some teachers just don’t mind if I am on my phone even though they have a ‘Red Zone.’” Walter concurred and remarked, “Some teachers just sign more than others. They are more strict with rules.” When John was questioned about the distribution of signatures from teachers, he claimed that, “it is usually not fair as we discussed at our PBS consequence day. It depends who you are.” John also mentioned that he suspected that one or two of the teachers who gave him signatures might have done so for a specific reason. He stated, “They [the teachers] give me signatures to tell me that you can do better and change behavior.” Some of the other students were not as forgiving with their comments about signatures and felt that one or two individual teachers unfairly targeted them. For instance, Laurie mentioned,

I think that not all the teachers would follow the same PBS expectations. I think it was more on who the teacher really was. I think that some teachers would be in a bad mood and take it out on the kid for really not even doing anything. Also, I didn’t like how someone who isn’t even my teacher could just give me a signature. I just think that it’s not their place to do that. (Email correspondence, 2017)

Students were very vocal about recognizing teachers’ inconsistencies and how the discordant practices impacted the fidelity of the PBS program. The students claimed that the signature process was not predictable between classrooms and depended on the teacher’s style, the manner in which the rules were interpreted, or as Laurie previously remarked, the mood of the teacher on a given day. Again, as mentioned, students noted inconsistencies, such as Eric, who said, “Some teachers do sign more” and Erin, who commented that, “Teachers make up things to sign.” Jack

stated that, “some teachers sign more planners” and Walter commented that, “Some teachers sign more than others.” Mr. Pete commented on this issue, and indicated how this impacted the students:

I think that any time you spell out the expectations for the children, and keep it succinct, it is a good thing. When you don’t do that, or if the expectations are not clear, such as when one day they get a signature for not having a pencil and the next day they don’t, it weakens the system.

The students’ comments about how some teachers signed more planners than others illustrate the importance of having some continuity with the PBS program.

From their comments, it could be assumed that the students noticed that their teachers interpreted PBS differently. The expectations were posted all over the school, including the classrooms, so in practice there should have been some consistency. Additionally, the teachers were aware that the expectations comprised rules that were designed to make the school safe, by having the students:

- Be Respectful
- Be Responsible
- Be Careful

These three tenets represented the overlying premise of the program with the behavioral expectations designed to fit into these categories. The students wanted to have continuity in their classes and have the teachers respond in kind when they broke a rule. In that regard, if they made mistakes or misbehaved, there would be predictable consequences, and if they demonstrated good behaviors or went beyond what was expected of them in the classroom, there would be predictable rewards. This was not the case in the school during these students’ 8th grade year.

Creating a classroom environment for optimal learning. The conclusion of the students' interviews pertained to questions about their vision of an ideal classroom environment for optimal learning. The goal was to see if the students could relate the concept that expectations were in place for just that reason: to create a favorable classroom culture for learning. They were encouraged to include all facets of the classroom. Their answers varied, but there were several overlapping statements.

Matthew, John, Josie, Erin, Eric, and Laurie all revealed in some manner that they required structure, predictability, and consistency in their classes. Matthew remarked, "I enjoy having daily lessons in each class and doing the same things, not switching too much up in each class. Things get difficult and confusing for me when teachers switch things up often." John stated, "The students can't have too much time to be off task. You can laugh, but [we] can't get off task for a long time." Josie indicated, "I like structure and a teacher that will keep chaos to a minimum." Erin seemed to feel the same way and said, "I learn more when the teacher is structured." Eric responded, "I like when the teacher keeps better order." Laurie claimed, "The teachers I work best with are the ones that are approachable and friendly. I work best when I have specific instructions, examples and structure" (E-Mail correspondence, 2017). The students wanted predictability and to be able to stay on task so they would not be distracted by a lack of order within the classroom environment. This was directly related to the implementation of PBS with fidelity; the program could potentially provide a more structured classroom culture, minimizing disruptions, and allowing more time for instruction. Matthew, Erin, and Jack specified that they like to have a daily lesson as well. As previously stated, Matthew indicated, "I enjoy having daily lessons in each class" (Email correspondence, 2017). Erin commented that,

“In math, we learn a lot because the teacher does a lesson every day and we learn.” Jack remarked, “[I like] structured lessons every day.”

Matthew, Erin, Walter, Billy, and John all stated that they like when the teacher has a sense of humor or when the teacher makes an effort to make the class fun. All students with the exception of Matthew preferred some variation of group seating in class. Matthew remarked, “Desks in rows work best for me, because it keeps me on task, and is easier for me to focus when I am facing the front of the classroom” (E-Mail correspondence, 2017).

Several factors can be elicited and summarized from these responses. The students’ aforementioned comments referenced their vision of an ideal classroom culture as well as their prior observations of teachers’ inconsistencies. The comments affirmed that most students have the desire to learn via structured classes and a predictable routine. Although there were one or two basic suggestions from the students, such as their requests for group seating in class and their preference that the teacher show humor while teaching, most addressed the more consequential issues of the need for consistency, structure, and daily lessons in school. It could be inferred that although students were cognizant of all of the PBS expectations, they felt that there was no consistency from the teachers regarding implementation. As clarified previously, Matthew, Laurie, Eric, Erin, Josie, and John all indicated in their interviews that it would be optimal if their teachers had a consistent and more predictable routine regarding disciplinary practices. Note the summary of students’ suggestions below in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6

Students' indicators for a classroom environment optimal for learning

Student Suggestion	Student(s)
Teacher having a sense of humor; approachable and friendly	Matthew, Erin, Walter, Billy, John Eric
Group seating, with either 3 or 4 desks together, or benches, such as in the science lab	Laurie, Sarah, Erin, Walter, Billy, John, Jack, Josie, Erin, Carl
Students seated individually in rows	Matthew
Teacher being fair and not having favorite students	John
Daily lessons	Matthew, John, Josie, Erin, Laurie
Predictability, structure and consistency	Matthew, Laurie, Eric, Erin, Josie, John
Structure, staying on task and keeping order	Matthew, John, Josie, Erin, Eric
Giving students time to unwind before class so they can get settled in, or giving them a short break	Walter, Jack
Creative planning such as simulations and group work for lessons	Walter, Billy, Eric
Isolating the troublemakers from their friends	Sarah

Rather than recapitulate, note Erin's response when asked about consistency with the expectations:

Yes [we understand the expectations]. I think that it can be confusing though, because different teachers have different ways of putting it [the rules]. Or they will say one thing and mean a different thing. The line is often blurred and there is not a lot of continuity in the classrooms.

Teacher perspectives. The preliminary questioning revealed two factors: Some teachers were using the poster with the PBS expectations to determine the students' behavioral guidelines and classroom discipline, and some teachers were using the codes in the student planner to record the students' behavioral transgressions. Teachers were aware that they were signing planners (discipline) more frequently than they were distributing coupons (rewards). Teachers

indicated that they were not following appropriate disciplinary procedures, both with planner signatures and the disbursement of reward coupons. Teachers revealed that they were not instructing students about the Behavioral Expectations and Social Curriculum, but rather conveying information when they were correcting behavior transgressions.

Teachers referenced the rules for discipline differently. The staff members were questioned about where they sourced the PBS Expectations, either the poster that was displayed throughout the school or the student planner. The poster listed the expectations in great detail, whereas the planner had brief rule codes for signatures related to the PBS Expectations, but was not specifically worded as such. Therefore, although the planner had signature codes that referenced the PBS expectations, they were disparate from the actual expectations. This could possibly account for why students appeared to notice so many inconsistencies in disciplinary tactics between the teachers. The planner had specific infraction codes to facilitate signing, but any infraction on the poster could be written in without a pre-assigned code. Occasionally there would be a question to a staff member regarding signing a planner for an infraction for which there was no code in the planner. For example, the eight PBS Expectations listed on the poster (see Figure 4.1) regarding “Hallways” were:

- Keep moving and stay to the right
- Be considerate of your locker neighbors
- Use passing time wisely
- Keep walking while you are talking
- Walk calmly
- Close and lock lockers appropriately

As well as:

- ALWAYS keep hands, feet and objects to self
- ALWAYS respect others' personal space and belongings

These can be encapsulated into one reason code ("A"), which represents "Disruptive Hallway Behavior." Teachers could either write in the code "A" for the reason, or specify exactly what the behavior was, such as "Jack slammed his locker."

As illustrated in Table 4.7, only four of the educators claimed to distribute coupons more than they signed students' planners, although all staff members had been instructed to focus on positive behavior via reward coupons. One of these four staff members was the guidance counselor and it was not in her domain to sign planners because she listens to students' explanations of why they misbehaved and advocates for them, rather than further punishing them. A second of the four staff members, Mr. Bruce, was a paraprofessional who worked with his assigned student with autism spectrum disorder via reward coupons. The final two staff members who distributed more coupons than they signed planners were the teachers that the students referred to when they said that only one or two of their teachers disbursed coupons to deserving students. Many teachers claimed that they just did not think of giving out coupons. Mr. Brendan was very vocal about how teachers needed to have more buy-in for the program. He remarked that he had no impetus to give out coupons, and said

I am not forced to follow the program, so I don't. If I was required to pass out a certain number of coupons per week, and I was encouraged to do that more regularly from someone such as the principal, and reminded often, I would do it. I'm a busy guy with a lot on my mind and a lot going on so I don't do it—it gets in my way and it slows me down and slows down what should be the focus of my class, which is the lesson of the day.

Mr. Brendan stated that he gave out “close to zero coupons” but he commented on situations that would warrant a coupon if in fact he was required to give coupons out: “Turning homework in on time, doing high quality work, good participation in class with extra comments by students, kind behavior, helpful behavior to another student and me.” Ms. Sandra confessed to the same dilemma, in that she was not required to distribute coupons so she did not, saying “I have been bad this year [about not giving out coupons], so very little.” She suggested, “Give teachers a goal and maybe we will give out more coupons.”

Table 4.7 below illustrates a summary of teachers’ responses to implementation regarding signatures and coupons, as well as an indication of how the staff referenced the rules for noting transgressions.

Table 4.7

Summary of Implementation of PBS (Signatures and Coupons)

PBS Guidance Source	
Source	Teachers
Used behavioral guidelines listed in the Student Planner for discipline	Ms. Heather, Mr. Brendan, Ms. Martine, Mr. Joseph, Ms. Sandra, Ms. Gabrielle, Ms. Madison, Ms. Corinne, Mr. Bruce
Used behavioral guidelines listed on the PBS Poster for discipline	Mr. Pete, Ms. Danielle, Ms. Allison, Ms. Gabrielle, Mr. Benjamin, Ms. Annaliese
Signatures for Negative Behavior	
Signed planners when rules were broken	All teachers except Ms. Annaliese ³
Signed planners more frequently than giving out reward coupons	Ms. Heather, Mr. Brendan, Mr. Pete, Ms. Martine,

³ Ms. Annaliese does not sign planners in her domain of work

	Mr. Joseph, Ms. Allison, Ms. Sandra, Ms. Gabrielle, Ms. Madison, Mr. Benjamin
Coupons for Positive Behavior	
Gave out reward coupons more frequently than signing planners	Ms. Danielle, Ms. Corinne, Mr. Bruce, Ms. Annaliese
Distributed reward coupons routinely for positive behavior	Ms. Martine, Ms. Danielle, Ms. Gabrielle, Ms. Corrine, Mr. Bruce

Staff members' perceptions of students' understanding of PBS. Only three of the 14 staff members interviewed indicated that they felt confident that students understood the expectations. This contrasts with the students' statements, wherein all 11 students stated that they understood behavioral expectations and elucidated the classroom and hallway rules during their interviews. In response to questioning about the students understanding the expectations, Mr. Bruce answered, "Yes, as a whole" and Mr. Joseph replied, "In my class, yes, because I spell that out. I make the expectations clear and they sign a contract. If you don't tell them, how do they know?" Note that Mr. Joseph is an elective teacher and he has a larger class than the core academic teachers, so he must have cooperation and order for his class to be successful.

Of the 11 staff members who claimed that they were not confident that students understood the expectations, six teachers did not feel comfortable committing to a straight yes or no answer and responded by saying that they thought the students understood, but they were not certain. Teachers commented that more instruction would make the behavior better. Ms. Allison said, "They [the students] need reminders the same way we do," and Mr. Benjamin confirmed this sentiment in his response, stating, "We need to remind and reinforce them—at this stage the kids should know how to behave, but could we do a better job to make them aware? Yes!" Ms. Madison remarked, "I think that they know, but they often don't care to follow the expectations"

which correlated with some students' comments. Ms. Holly contributed, "I think that they know when they are violating a rule. The consequence for not following a rule is not strong enough."

Ms. Martine also said, "I think so [that the students know the expectations] and in my class they know what the expectations are. I also think that in other classes there are different expectations so that makes it difficult to enforce." Students mentioned this on several occasions, and remarked that they would like to see consistency between the classrooms and teachers.

Four teachers and the guidance counselor stated that they felt that students absolutely did not understand the behavior guidelines. The counselor expressed that, "As we move through the year, things can get loose and staff members have policies that do not match. So, the overall expectations are not consistent" (Email correspondence, 2017). Mr. Pete echoed the problems that the staff has with consistency and alleged that these classroom inconsistencies have "been problematic for students." As indicated in the student data section, several students agreed with Mr. Pete about the implementation being troublesome and that that they did not always know what to expect from their teachers. Mr. Bruce commented that students would have an easier time "if all teachers followed the same guidelines." These comments indicate that the teachers were aware that they were not addressing infractions consistently. Some teachers gave out signatures and others did not. Consistency between staff members is crucial and Ms. Annaliese summed this up by saying, "staff members have policies that do not match. So, the overall expectations are not always consistent."

Ms. Danielle also stated that she felt that the students did not understand the behavioral expectations and claimed that students:

are shocked when I stop them in the halls when they are running or shoving other students . . . or smacking books out of their hands. Or if I apply the NBC [No Bodily Contact] rule in the classroom they allege it is not a rule except in the hall.

Ms. Sandra addressed a more significant issue, saying that:

They [the students] don't know that they are in a place where they should respect people, things and audiences. They should get from one place to another and respect the fact that they are in a learning environment and not a social situation. (Email correspondence, 2017)

Teaching students how to behave as good citizens and how to show respect to adults and peers is part of what defines the social curriculum. Although Ms. Sandra recognized the need for students to learn the social curriculum, she confessed that she did not address any of these issues with her students, except for situational lessons during the school day.

Teacher communication of behavioral expectations. As previously mentioned, although the 8th graders felt that they understood the behavioral expectations, some of them suggested that it would be helpful if teachers gave reminders about what behavior was expected and followed the PBS protocol with consistency. Teachers were asked if they felt that the PBS guidelines were communicated to the students in a way they understood. Only one staff member, Mr. Bruce, gave a definitive answer of yes. Nonetheless, he commented that he would still appreciate more training to teach the students about the program, saying, “Yes, definitely [I would like more training]. I have pieced it [PBS] together after these years, but most of the staff has no idea what to do.”

Many of the teachers stated that they did not communicate reinforcement of the expectations to students throughout the year because they were not required to do so. Ms. Sandra

stated, “The administration used to walk us through it in a smaller setting in advisory and I would love to bring that back.” In my past experiences in the school I witnessed school administrators request that teachers discuss and explain the expectations at the onset of the school year, reinforcing this information with supplemental tutorials throughout the remainder of the year. However, this has not been done for some time and since it was not required, some teachers did not do this of their own volition. When Mr. Brendan was questioned about regularly reinforcing expectations, he responded, “Well, when we do it, sure!” Ms. Allison shared a similar view, saying, “Yes, I think we need more re-teaching during the year.” Ms. Corinne stated that, “Yes I do [think we need to reinforce the expectations]. We need to reiterate it regularly because it is not often enough. Maybe [we should do it] every quarter.”

Mr. Joseph suggested that the school would benefit from having an assembly with the administrators discussing the behavioral guidelines with each grade individually because “if the advisory teacher goes over it, they learn. Many [teachers] don’t [go over the expectations].” An assembly would ensure that all students hear the same information. Ms. Madison remarked that teachers should provide more frequent reminders, because doing a good job at the beginning of the year is just not enough. She also suggested that the administrators could provide this instruction “during our [weekly] all-school meetings to find a coherent way to communicate the rules to the students so we don’t use our class time.”

Ms. Gabrielle also stated that the teachers should not assume that the 8th graders understood the expectations without being reminded. She commented,

I think that this [understanding expectations] is true for our 6th graders, and that is because the 6th grade teachers go over all the behavioral guidelines explicitly. Our

mistake is assuming that the [8th grade] kids know this stuff and they don't. We have to go over this every year.

Ms. Martine revealed that in her previous school they did weekly lessons on the expectations, which she thought was a good idea. She indicated that each week the teachers “focused on one skill and expectation, and then expanded on it.” She said that even when she tried to teach the guidelines during Advisory, the students were too wound up to listen, and she was “readily aware that they were not tuned in.” Like Ms. Martine, Ms. Annaliese also felt that the students did not successfully process a teacher lesson during Advisory. She suggested that the most effective way to communicate the expectations was to have the “students create their own lessons via skits or songs, and put them on the school’s broadcast system during the Advisory period, because students will listen to other students.”

Mr. Pete taught an academic support class so students who were “frequent flyers”—to quote Mr. Pete—and often disobeyed rules were frequently scheduled in his classes. He stated that he did not feel that students understood the expectations, saying, “There is some vagueness. Kids are now asking for signatures as a joke and I would like to see some sort of buy in.” Mr. Benjamin agreed that the 8th graders were not invested in following the expectations. He remarked,

We need to remind and reinforce them. At this stage the kids should know how to behave, but could we do a better job to make them aware? Yes. And, I don't know the best way to do that. We have 8th grade and by that time they really don't want to hear anything.

As stated previously, students unanimously stated that they understood the rules and expectations for behavior, while teachers revealed that they thought the students did not understand the

expectations. Perhaps teachers felt that if the students understood the expectations the natural assumption would be that they would follow the rules. It could be argued that although students understood the rules, they were not discussed with them regularly, so perhaps the students had no connection with the teachers regarding the program. Table 4.8 summarizes the teachers' responses to the aforementioned question, "Do you feel that PBS guidelines are communicated to the students in a way they understand?" Except for Mr. Barry, all teachers provided a qualifying comment, outlined below, when they provided their responses:

Table 4.8

Summary of Educators' Comments

	Qualifying Comments	Teacher
Yes	Only the first week of the year.	Ms. Holly
	When we do it, sure.	Mr. Brendan
	If the advisory teacher goes over it, they learn. Otherwise, they don't.	Mr. Joseph
	We need more re-teaching during the year.	Ms. Allison
	We hammer them with rules at the beginning of the year and then it dissipates as the year goes on.	Ms. Madison
	We need to reiterate it regularly.	Ms. Corinne
	The best way for it [the expectations] to be communicated is from the students, in the broadcast journalism class. Examples of this could be skits or videos. They could televise them during advisory.	Ms. Annaliese
No	There is some vagueness. I would like to see buy in.	Mr. Pete
	Students do not focus on learning the expectations during advisory. We need to plan weekly lessons throughout the school year.	Ms. Martine
	For the students who need it the most, they are not communicated enough, although it seems like just common sense.	Ms. Danielle

No	We used to walk it through in a smaller setting in advisory and I would love to bring that back.	Ms. Sandra
	Our mistake is assuming that the kids know this stuff and they don't. We need to do re-teaching for the older grades.	Ms. Gabrielle
	I don't know the best way to do that. By 8th grade they really don't want to hear anything. A regular thing might be better.	Mr. Benjamin

The aggregate of teacher responses confirmed that if and when the expectations were taught, it was usually at the beginning of the year and not subsequently followed up on directly. Students' earlier comments confirmed this as well. What is interesting in the teachers' comments is that whether or not they answered yes or no, they had very similar comments. For instance, Mr. Joseph replied yes and said, "If the advisory teacher goes over it, they learn. Otherwise, they don't." Ms. Sandra said no, and indicated, "We used to walk it through in a smaller setting in advisory and I would love to bring that back." Ms. Allison, responding yes, stated, "We need more re-teaching during the year." Ms. Gabrielle, who said no, mentioned, "Our mistake is assuming that the kids know this stuff and they don't. We need to do re-teaching for the older grades." Mr. Benjamin also responded no and remarked, "A regular thing [teaching expectations] might be better.

Insufficient instruction for behavioral expectations and the social curriculum.

Teaching students how to behave as good citizens and how to show respect to adults and peers is part of what defines the social curriculum. According to the Handbook of Social and Emotional Learning: Research and Practice (Durlak, Domitrovich, Weissberg, Gullotta, & Comer, 2016), the social curriculum can be defined as the following:

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Management
- Social Awareness
- Relationship Skills
- Responsible Decision Making

School is one of the primary places where students learn social and emotional skills. Teachers were questioned about their views on establishing classroom culture and if they regularly incorporated commentary or lessons on etiquette, good citizenship, or the social curriculum—the latter term being defined as teaching children how to be socially intelligent and respectful. There was no protocol in place at the middle school for teachers to be accountable for this type of instruction. Therefore, the PBS program lacked continuity and proper compliance. The students had also revealed that the teachers were not communicating the behavioral expectations regularly to them and the teachers' interview responses validated this.

Corrective versus preemptive instruction. When teachers responded to questions about classroom culture and teaching the social curriculum, only two teachers of the 14 classroom teachers indicated that they routinely taught or modeled the social curriculum as part of their daily classroom practices. Mr. Benjamin was one of the two teachers. He was also the one particular teacher that the students regularly cited as being consistent with his discipline protocol and his classroom culture. He stated that his classroom culture was “to always have high expectations for my students, behaviorally, academically, and showing respect.” Mr. Benjamin said he demonstrated appropriate behavior daily: “I absolutely do model good citizenship daily, and I try not to let anything slide.” The other of the two teachers was Mr. Pete. As previously mentioned, Mr. Pete taught an academic assistance class and students who did not have

consistent parental or family support at home were scheduled with him. These children were usually splitting their time between their mother's and father's homes or their parents worked late and they were either alone or with a babysitter after school. The counselors scheduled these children in Mr. Pete's class to learn organizational skills and to get assistance with their homework or help with preparing for tests. The social curriculum was part of Mr. Pete's daily curriculum and he taught and modeled good etiquette and basic common courtesy. He explained,

I explain that when a teacher greets you by name, you do the same in return and that is called common courtesy. I think that we have to do that [teach common courtesy], because if we don't, kids so rarely see decent models that kids don't know how to respond when an adult speaks to them.

He was very passionate about teaching students how to behave appropriately and continued by saying,

I also need to teach these children basic school behavior, such as when they walk into a classroom you come in quietly, you have until the bell rings and then when the bell rings you need to be in a seat with a pencil and your planner.

Mr. Pete promoted a culture of correct school protocol and a solid work ethic. He expected good behavior and he worked at teaching his students how to behave appropriately in school.

Ms. Allison, Ms. Gabrielle, Ms. Corinne, and Mr. Bruce stated that their underlying classroom theme and culture was "respect," the sine qua non for socially appropriate behavior, but that they did not teach good manners or protocol unless the situation arose where it was needed. Ms. Allison indicated, "I don't know that I would say I teach it [the social curriculum] but I have one rule and that is respect." Ms. Gabrielle remarked that she did not give lessons on the social curriculum "except when it comes up in context. Literally, I will stop everything and

give them a lesson to benefit them as a human being.” Mr. Bruce revealed that he never taught lessons on behavior, but said, “I try to be respectful and positive so I can model that behavior for the students.” He remarked, “I also point out things to students that come up, [such as] interrupting or walking in front of someone who is speaking in front of class.”

The elective teachers, Ms. Holly and Mr. Joseph, indicated that they expected good behavior for their classes to run smoothly. Ms. Holly, who taught a music class, admitted that she did not specifically teach the social curriculum but indicated that:

The structure [of my class] is for teamwork; we have to listen to each other and blend with each other so we are doing things at the same time. The nature of my class requires mutual respect and collaboration.

Mr. Joseph, who taught instrumental music, had similar expectations from his students and mentioned that, “If someone is playing [an instrument] in front of class, I teach them [the students] how to conduct themselves. For most other things, [I teach the students] as they [issues] come up.” Both teachers mentioned that they wanted their students to comprise a cohesive unit so they made corrections to behavior when it was necessary, although Ms. Holly remarked that, “The consequence for not following a rule is not strong enough.”

Ms. Danielle and Ms. Madison often had presentations in class and ensured that their students showed proper protocol for behavior in that setting or they would make corrections to the poor behavior. Ms. Danielle reported a recent happening in her class:

Jack walked right up in front of the class when I was talking. I stopped talking to teach them [the students] a lesson when someone is talking. You do not walk in front of someone; find a way to walk around the person speaking. Well, it happened again about a week later with the same boy and this time the kids knew it was inappropriate.

Ms. Danielle also commented that she reminds students about “being respectful to others. The kids are not allowed to say shut up.” Ms. Madison said that she works with the students on appropriate behavior during presentations in class because she feels it is important to be “quiet when others are presenting, and don’t leave or enter the room when someone else is presenting.”

Mr. Brendan, Ms. Martine, and Ms. Sandra each individually remarked on having discussions related to the social curriculum with their students when an issue or problem arose in class. For instance, Mr. Brendan stated that:

Good manners and appropriate interactions are always required, and when it is not seen or if they break a rule they are reminded what is appropriate. For instance, sarcasm is not allowed. Negative comments are immediately called out and I demand it to be stopped.

Mr. Brendan also noted that, “This group of students, middle school, they need more of that [teaching the social curriculum] as they mature and they get ready to go on to high school.” Ms. Martine also revealed that she teaches good manners and protocol only when there is a problem and suggested that students needed to understand what constituted rude behavior because sometimes they just don’t realize they are being ill mannered. She remarked, “We have discussions about “‘this [the transgression] is being rude and this is why’ and it is usually a momentary reminder of what is acceptable and polite and socially acceptable behavior.” Ms. Sandra mentioned that, “I don’t have any specific lessons that I teach regarding behavior. Instead I focus on [inappropriate] behaviors as I see them” (Email correspondence, 2017). She noted that she gives her students directions in class that can also fall under the umbrella of good manners, such as when she remarked, “I explain how I want them to behave when they are listening to class presentations. Listening intently and giving constructive feedback are key elements” (Email correspondence, 2017).

Lastly, the counselor, Ms. Annaliese, noted that although she supervised the well-being of 300 students, she tried to provide individual and group lessons on manners and citizenship to the 6th graders and new students. She remarked:

I use my focus group of children, the 6th graders and all of the students new to our school, and I give them a needs assessment related to their social issues. Based on the findings of these, I go in to classrooms to teach lessons that will help them improve [their behavior]. I have also run girls' groups related to conflicts within friendship groups, and boys' groups on resiliency that teaches [them] coping skills and how one should self advocate. (Email correspondence, 2017)

Ms. Annaliese teaches the students preemptively in 6th grade and then follows up with her students when an issue comes to her from a teacher about a student's behavior. She said, "I do this as my job; I teach this [social curriculum] to my 6th grade students to help them with their everyday behavior." She remarked that she "cultivated a relationship with my students and their parents" to have them come to her with behavioral issues. She said, "I advocate for my students, but I also taught them how they could make a better choice [when they get in trouble] so they could learn that one poor choice does not turn into more down the road."

All teachers spoke of the need to have the students educated in the social curriculum. Except for Mr. Pete and Ms. Annaliese, none of these teachers specifically educated the students in these skills. They expected for them to show respect, have good manners, and behave like good citizens. They did not teach the social curriculum preemptively, but rather when a situation arose with inappropriate behavior that needed to be corrected. As mentioned, the teachers and staff also designated the aggregate factors that comprised their classroom culture and most agreed that they promoted mutual respect, trust, and cooperation. Teachers indicated how they

taught students the social curriculum in some fashion, but primarily did so via situational necessity. Teachers did not give daily lessons on the social curriculum preemptively per se, but rather in a corrective mode when a student misbehaved or handled a situation inappropriately.

Summary

Although students claimed to understand the behavioral expectations, infractions did not abate. Additionally, the students perceived that teachers' inconsistencies impacted the fidelity of PBS and the protocol for discipline. The teachers indicated that they were not consistent with communicating or implementing the PBS Behavioral Expectations and reward protocol. Finally, there was insufficient instruction and education for students on the Behavioral Expectations and the Social Curriculum

Students reported that they clearly comprehended school rules and the PBS expectations, yet they continued to have behavioral transgressions which resulted in getting their planners signed. Students reported that teachers did not have continuity when they were enforcing school rules and the PBS guidelines, which caused uncertainty for students in their classes. Students were uncertain what to expect from their teachers and often the boundaries were not explicit and straightforward. Teachers reported that they were aware that they were not adhering to the appropriate disciplinary protocol, vis-à-vis coupon disbursement to reward students versus signatures to discipline students. Teachers described their protocol for teaching the behavioral expectations and the social curriculum, and revealed that they were doing so while correcting behavior rather than offering preemptive instruction.

Conclusion

The students' and teachers' interviews supported the findings below:

- Although students claimed to understand the behavioral expectations, infractions did not abate.
- The students perceived that teachers' inconsistencies impacted the fidelity of PBS and the protocol for discipline.
- The teachers indicated that they were not consistent with communicating or implementing the PBS Behavioral Expectations and reward protocol.
- There was insufficient instruction and education for students on the Behavioral Expectations and the Social Curriculum

Students reported that they clearly comprehended school rules and the PBS expectations, yet they continued to have behavioral transgressions that resulted in getting their planners signed. Students reported that teachers did not have continuity when they were enforcing school rules and the PBS guidelines, which caused uncertainty for students in their classes. Students were uncertain what to expect from their teachers, and the boundaries were often not explicit and straightforward. Teachers reported that they were aware that they were not adhering to the appropriate disciplinary protocol, vis-à-vis coupon disbursement to reward students versus signatures to discipline students. Teachers described their protocol for teaching the Behavioral Expectations and the Social Curriculum and revealed that they were doing so while correcting behavior, rather than offering preemptive instruction.

Chapter 5: Interpretations and Recommendations

This study examined and analyzed the implementation of a Positive Behavioral Support (PBS) program at Fitzpatrick Middle School. The study also explored the potential of authentic implementation of PBS in order to achieve optimal classroom culture and, ultimately, academic achievement. This dissertation research was guided by the following research questions:

4. How is the Positive Behavioral Support (PBS) program represented in the classrooms at Fitzpatrick Middle School? How are support staff and teachers implementing PBS? What is being communicated to students regarding the social curriculum and classroom expectations?
5. What are the teachers' attitudes and perspectives toward classroom culture at Fitzpatrick Middle School?
6. What do the teachers understand regarding the implementation of PBS within the classroom setting?

This study illustrates the different components that comprised the PBS program at Fitzpatrick Middle School and how the program was executed. The PBS program, when implemented authentically, has the potential to provide students with a classroom culture that fosters optimal learning (Farmer, Reinke, & Brooks, 2014; Good & Grouws, 1977; Sugai & Horner, 2002). When students adhere to the PBS guidelines, they are better able to remain on task and distractions are minimized within the classroom. This chapter examines the different components of the PBS program as they were implemented within Fitzpatrick Middle School and their links to broader themes in the current literature.

The PBS studies discussed in Chapter 2 highlight that much of the research published thus far regarding PBS implementation primarily attends to two different areas. Some of these studies focus to a specific school or district that lacks an established or organized disciplinary program and the need for a PBS program. Within these studies, the researchers reveal all of the problems that exist within the school setting, often focusing on suspensions, expulsions, poor school culture, and zero tolerance (Gregory et al., 2010). The other common focus for research on PBS in schools is an examination of the ways in which a school or district initiated the PBS program, implemented it with fidelity, and reported positive outcomes. Within these studies, the researchers often cite positive outcomes through a decrease in detentions, ODRs, and problem behavior. The latter focus is the most common within this area of research, in part because the researchers present data and testimonials illustrating the advantages of the PBS program while promoting its value (Flannery & Sugai, 2009; Horner et al., 2005; McKevitt & Braaksma, 2007). This study from Fitzpatrick Middle School does not fall into either of these areas; it pertains to a school where PBS has already been established, but there has been a breakdown in its implementation and this breakdown is negatively impacting the students and the classroom culture. The findings from the study indicated that:

- Although students claimed to understand the behavioral expectations, infractions did not abate
- The students perceived that teachers' inconsistencies impacted the fidelity of PBS and the protocol for discipline resulting in a breakdown of implementation
- The teachers indicated that they were not consistent with communicating the PBS Behavioral Expectations or implementing the reward protocol

- There was insufficient instruction and education for students on the Behavioral Expectations and the Social Curriculum

Breakdown in PBS Implementation

Fitzpatrick Middle School appeared to struggle with continuing disciplinary issues in large part due to the fact that there was no set policy for school-wide implementation of PBS, which would have provided the teachers with parameters, guidelines, and concrete practices to follow—as discussed by Larrivee (2005) and Emmer and Stough (2001). The PBS program, when authentically implemented, can potentially provide students with a classroom culture in which they can achieve their goal of optimal learning. Students reported feeling that the teachers were inconsistent with their disciplinary practices and teachers revealed that they recognized that they had not been adequately communicating the expectations or implementing the program with fidelity.

Student participation and engagement. Despite the implementation of the PBS program, the eighth-grade students continued to accrue signatures in their planners for disciplinary infractions and subsequent office detention referrals (ODRs). This could be attributed to the fact that the teachers were not following the PBS structural guidelines with fidelity, so students were willing to take the gamble that there would be no consequence for their poor behavior or infractions within the school.

The students did not necessarily absolve themselves of blame for breaking the rules and receiving their infractions, but given that they frequently commented on the many inconsistencies with PBS implementation, this may have been the primary reason that they continued to commit infractions. The students indicated that they did not understand what was expected of them regarding behavior in the classroom—or that behavioral expectations were

inconsistent between classrooms—and remarked that they could not predict what would happen regarding discipline in any classroom on a given day. One of the students indicated that the expectations were “confusing...because different teachers have different ways of putting it [the rules]. The line is often blurred and there is not a lot of continuity in [the] classrooms.” If the rules for behavior are not consistently communicated and enforced, students will not be able to assimilate what is expected of them (Emmer & Stough, 2001; Horner et al., 2005).

It would appear that Fitzpatrick Middle School teachers and administration struggled with implementation because they had not formulated a plan to teach students the tenets of the PBS guidelines nor basic instruction pertaining to the principles of the social curriculum (Bohanon et al., 2006; Horner et al., 2005; Skiba & Peterson, 2003). This resulted in a breakdown in the program’s implementation. Students also lacked the frequent reinforcement of this information needed to alleviate confusion regarding behavioral expectations. It is likely that much of the confusion the students experienced about what was expected of them behaviorally could have been alleviated with consistent reminders and reinforcement (Turnbull et al., 2002). This lack of organization and continuity within the program indicates a clear breakdown in the implementation of PBS. The implications of this breakdown are varied, the most obvious being the continued infractions committed by students given inconsistent delivery of signatures in their planners for disobeying rules and behavioral guidelines.

PBS and the need for consistency. The successful implementation of PBS requires commitment and participation from all parties. The failure of teachers to consistently deliver rewards that students had earned or acknowledge and recognize positive student behavior is significant in that it led to the loss of student participation in the PBS program. The students at Fitzpatrick Middle School required a more uniform and predictable system: when they broke

rules, they should have been able to expect to receive a signature. When they demonstrated positive behavior, they should have been able to expect to receive a reward coupon.

Unfortunately, this was not the case.

An integral component of the PBS program is the teachers' recognition of positive behavior via a tangible reward system (Horner et al., 2010). Fitzpatrick Middle School employed a token economy wherein students earned PBS coupons that could be spent at the PBS store. When a student demonstrated appropriate behavior and was recognized for it by a teacher, the student would expect to receive a PBS coupon. The students could accumulate these coupons and redeem them at the weekly PBS store for prizes or treats, such as school supplies, healthy snacks, or craft items. In their interviews, teachers confessed that they were not vigilant about or consistent in recognizing and noting good behavior and rewarding the behavior commensurately. This may be due to the fact that school administrators did not require the teachers to distribute a requisite number of coupons per week or per semester, so the delivery of coupons simply lacked the perceived relevance of other competing demands. Since the school had no set policy on coupon distribution, the process of rewarding a student for good behavior could easily be disregarded by the teachers without consequences from the administration. This resulted in the loss of participation on the part of the teachers, which further weakened the PBS program. As the goal of PBS is to encourage positive behavior, it is vital that rewards and recognition be delivered consistently as an integral part of this goal. Almost all of the students interviewed in this study shared at least one issue that bothered them about rewards for positive behavior and many specified that they did not regularly receive coupons in recognition of good behavior. Without this organized reward system positive behavior went unrecognized and the program lacked fidelity (Alberto & Troutman, 2006).

It would appear that Fitzpatrick Middle School would benefit from an organized system of distributed rewards. In order to ensure consistent allocation and delivery of coupons recognizing good behavior, the administrators could create parameters wherein teachers would be required to reward a requisite number of students per week in order to maintain a framework of continuity for the students. The research has indicated that students need to know that when they behave in an appropriate manner, it is being noted and acknowledged in a consistent fashion—either with a specific school reward or just a comment or recognition by a teacher or staff member (Bohanen et al., 2009; McKevitt & Braaksma, 2007; Alberto & Troutman, 2006; Lasse et al., 2006; Horner et al., 2005; Luiselli et al., 2005).

Additionally, there was a system for the aggregate of rewards at the end of each quarter at Fitzpatrick Middle School, per the recommendation of the county PBS administration. Students who had received less than the designated number of signatures for the quarter (six for the time period of the study) were invited to a special celebration—being excused from several hours of their school day for a celebratory reward party hosted by the PBS committee. The students who received six or more signatures in their planner for the quarter were required to attend a session with a teacher, at which time they were asked to reflect upon their behavior for the past quarter and write an essay on their reflections. Theoretically this appeared to be a sound idea and a tangible reward and it fulfilled the recommendation offered by the county for a large-scale reward system. However, upon closer examination it became clear that the teachers and staff did not keep the students accountable. It was difficult to keep this program organized, in part because many of the students lost their planners and some of the students who were assigned to the essay room took advantage of the confusion and attended the parties instead. Moreover, many of the students assigned to the essay room had their parents call in to excuse them for the

afternoon that they were supposed to reflect on their behavior. So, some of the aforementioned students assigned to the essay room were picked up at school to enjoy a half-day off of school, rather than reflecting on their behavior with the designated teacher and writing an essay on their behavior. Those students who opted to stay and fulfill the essay requirement were often resentful that the other students assigned to this session were able to go home for the afternoon.

The fact that this reward system did not work offers additional evidence of the breakdown in implementation. Analysis of this situation reveals that this lack of consistency occurred because there was not careful advanced planning or organization, so again the students felt that there was no continuity. This reflects a loss of participation and buy-in from a third party: the school administration. For instance, it might have been worthwhile for the administration to contact the parents of the students who were assigned to the essay room to explain what had been planned and why it was important for the student to participate in the reflection time. Another task that fell through the cracks was the tracking of student signatures. The signature count should have been completed well in advance of the celebration date, so a staff member could double-check the students who were assigned for the essay room. Attendance should have been taken carefully in the essay room with a pre-planned consequence for all students who do not attend. All of these circumstances contributed to the students' lack of trust in the PBS implementation.

The instruction of PBS Expectations and the Social Curriculum (Bohanon et al., 2006; Horner et al., 2005), organized discipline policies (Emmer and Stough, 2001), and the regular and predictable implementation of rewards (Alberto & Troutman, 2006; Horner et al., 2005) are all critical components of the PBS program. These factors appear to be lacking a solid foundation at Fitzpatrick Middle School. The result of this breakdown was that students continued to elicit

signatures because of the lack of consistency, breakdown in implementation regarding consequences and rewards, and the absence of structured education regarding the expectations.

PBS and Educator Factors

Fitzpatrick teachers spoke about having specific issues with students not knowing appropriate manners or school protocol in the study interviews. Regular instruction of the PBS expectations and the social curriculum may not necessarily reduce the number of student infractions, but educating the students regarding these expectations is still advantageous because it encourages consistent classroom culture and a better understanding between students and teachers (Skiba & Peterson, 2003). These efforts also support the fidelity of the PBS program guidelines and thereby demonstrate to students that there is consistency throughout the school.

Educators' responsibilities and involvement. It is clear that the teachers of Fitzpatrick Middle School should have been provided the preparation, instruction, support, and tools to effectively implement PBS with confidence and uniformity. Systematic and consistent education and the reinforcement of the PBS expectations for both teachers and staff are considered to be best practices for PBS implementation (Bohanon et al., 2006; Emmer & Stough, 2001). It appears that the lack of this requisite organized instruction contributed to the breakdown in implementation, as well as the Fitzpatrick teachers' discernable anxiety with the PBS program. Teachers reported feeling a lack of confidence for enacting the protocol. The only formal PBS training offered to the teachers was at the onset of the program and only a small percentage of teachers attended. The remainder of the teachers and support staff were only given a basic outline of the program and an instructional pamphlet at staff meetings. The teachers new to the school after the onset of the program were given a brief introduction to the program from the assistant principal when they started out at Fitzpatrick. If the assistant principal was not

available, the new teacher had to learn the process “on the job” by piecing together advice from colleagues, information that could be gleaned from the instructional pamphlet, and his or her own beliefs regarding behavioral expectations and school discipline.

A PBS team member at Fitzpatrick suggested that the teachers should give monthly class lessons, rotating core academic classes to keep everyone on even footing. This organized instruction of behavioral protocol is an established strategy and has been implemented with great success. Researchers have noted a decrease in behavioral issues when students were taught behavioral rules on a regular basis (Morrissey et al., 2010). Unfortunately, the Fitzpatrick teachers indicated in their interviews that they did not receive scheduled PBS education at staff development or coaching, and consequently were unable to convey information and expectations appropriately to students. Many of the students also claimed that they were not getting instruction on behavior guidelines or the social curriculum.

PBS promotes and nurtures organized instruction of the expectations and the social curriculum; it is a school-wide system wherein teachers communicate classroom expectations, school guidelines and rules, and reward students for following them (Horner et al., 2005). McKevitt and Braaksma (2007) specified that successful implementation of PBS must include (a) teachers providing regular and abundant positive reinforcement to students for predetermined appropriate behavior and following school and classroom rules and (b) conversely, assigning negative consequences (signatures in the planner) consistently when students do not adhere to the guidelines. Researchers have acknowledged the ways in which praise and teacher communication affect students’ behaviors and noted that students need to observe that their appropriate behaviors are noticed and acknowledged (Horner et al., 2005; McKevitt & Braaksma, 2007). For this reason, the primary level of PBS includes some tangible reward

system. Many of the teachers at Fitzpatrick Middle School approached PBS with some trepidation because they had not been given the training to fully understand the program and they were uncertain how to negotiate signing planners and giving out reward coupons without disrupting their lessons.

Fitzpatrick teachers readily admitted that they were not teaching or discussing the PBS matrix or the social curriculum to the students on a regular basis. This appeared to cause confusion in the classrooms because the students did not know what to expect from each classroom teacher. There was no systematic plan to introduce and review behavior expectations and since teachers were not required to follow through on the instruction of behavioral guidelines, many chose not to commit to the task. This appears to be another example of the consequences of losing teacher “buy-in” to the PBS program, which was exacerbated by the fact that there were no consequences for not committing to the program.

Emmer and Stough (2001) indicated that effective classroom management is more successful when it is used in a preventative mode, rather than a reactionary mode. They also stated that teachers create an optimal classroom environment when they take the time in class to instruct students on behavioral expectations in their classroom, which did not occur with regularity at Fitzpatrick. This would include establishing clear rules and guidelines regularly and addressing behavioral issues as they occur—before they become major problems rather than the reactionary discipline instruction, which is what transpired at Fitzpatrick (Emmer & Stough, 2001; Flannery & Sugai, 2009). Teachers did not preemptively initiate any instruction of the behavioral expectations or the social curriculum, but corrected behavior issues as they arose. It appears that the students who were on the fringe of the problem—meaning that they were not the ones committing the behavioral transgression—would often not attend to the “corrective lesson”

because it did not necessarily pertain to them. This is likely the reason that many students felt that the teachers were not actually teaching them the expectations or the basic social curriculum. It is necessary to employ formal and active supports when any new program is introduced into a school. Regarding the future success of the Fitzpatrick PBS program, the education of students and teachers is critical, as is the need for coaching and administrative backing to ensure that the program is implemented with fidelity (Flannery & Sugai, 2009).

Teacher/student participation. Fitzpatrick Middle School students did not necessarily request to be involved in the PBS planning, however, other case studies have illustrated that the students' involvement and input have motivated and encouraged staff to engage in the PBS program (Flannery & Sugai, 2009). As the interviews within the study progressed, it became clear how valuable the students' input was and how the teachers would benefit from hearing what the students had to say. The students had valid and rational complaints about parity and the lack of behavioral instruction and the staff substantiated many of these same issues. This could translate into a productive discussion to work out the inconsistencies in the program together, thereby having students strengthen staff participation at Fitzpatrick. Utilizing student and administrative input, the Fitzpatrick teachers could incorporate their comments and suggestions into the curriculum for PBS, and ultimately have a school wide process, similar to what has been implemented in other schools (Flannery & Sugai, 2009).

Perceived barriers to educator involvement. There is no question that teachers within Fitzpatrick had priorities that competed with those of the PBS program, such as planning and implementing their own curriculum, preparing for high-stakes standardized testing, the demands of state-wide evaluation, and the numerous other obligations that the teaching profession must face. However, if the Fitzpatrick administration considered organizing and implementing the

practice of educating and reinforcing behavioral rules to ensure that students learn the social curriculum, Fitzpatrick teachers could have a more successful classroom climate and increased student cooperation throughout the school year (Skiba & Peterson, 2003; Sugai et al., 2011; Turnbull et al., 2002). As previously stated, the teachers at Fitzpatrick Middle School were aware that they needed to give students more instruction and reinforcement of the behavioral expectations and the social curriculum. The teachers understood that an established program of instruction was relevant and necessary for optimal implementation of the program, and that they needed to align the program guidelines with the daily curriculum so students would be able to benefit from having dependable and predictable parameters for behavior. A successful program requires planning, education, reinforcement and continual support (Flannery & Sugai, 2009), and teachers did not receive adequate administrative support and structured instruction for PBS implementation.

Educating students in the social curriculum is a critical component of making PBS a successful program (McKevitt & Braaksma, 2007; Skiba & Peterson, 2003; Sugai et al., 2011; Turnbull et al., 2002), yet many of the teachers did not take the time to teach this because of time constraints. The social curriculum is an integral part of the classroom culture and serves as a guide for student behavior and accountability (Skiba & Peterson, 2003), even though it is not a specific written curriculum. Students would benefit greatly from having regular instruction in school protocol, good manners, demeanor, and conduct. This is knowledge they can carry forward throughout life. Fitzpatrick teachers reported that they often delivered “on-the-spot” lessons when a transgression occurred to remind students about good manners, but no plans were created in advance—most likely due to the aforementioned time constraints. Examining the data from the teachers’ interviews, it appears that the teachers were willing to do what it takes to

make the program successful, but they needed parameters, administrative support, and staff development to learn how to implement PBS successfully.

Another obstacle precluding the Fitzpatrick teachers from full engagement into the PBS program was the absence of buy-in because the administration failed to commit to a tangible plan. The administration neglected to formulate guidelines and requirements for teachers, so the teachers justifiably felt no responsibility to follow through with the program, such as signing planners or distributing reward coupons. Teachers reported feeling that they were not required to participate, because there was no accountability if they did not. Again, a successful PBS program requires participation from all involved parties, including the entire school community (Turnbull et al., 2002). This participation also eliminates many of the inconsistencies that occur when each teacher is following his or her own individual plan of action. For the students to have the appropriate universal supports—which means that they are receiving organized instruction in the PBS guidelines and social curriculum—all of the teachers must teach, monitor and reinforce the expectations (Bohanen et al., 2009; Horner et al., 2005).

PBS and the Fitzpatrick School Climate

School discipline and social curriculum. There are a wide variety of school discipline methods utilized in schools, ranging from zero tolerance to the Positive Behavioral Support program. As the goal of schools is to educate students, it is counterproductive to have students removed from classes because of suspensions or expulsions, because the punitive outcomes of the zero-tolerance policy can prevent learning from taking place (Dinkes et al., 2007; Skiba & Peterson, 2000; Wallace et al., 2008). In light of this fact, it is clear why the PBS program is so successful in creating and maintaining a positive school climate. Skiba and Peterson (2003) suggested factors that comprise a productive program for schools and these criteria are imbedded

in the PBS program at Fitzpatrick: (a) guaranteed safety for students and staff; (b) a focus on creating a positive culture in the classrooms while promoting greater achievement; (c) the education of students in appropriate behaviors and good manners; and (d) continual reminders and lessons for students and staff to establish the protocol for behavior and prevent future occurrences of misbehavior. The breakdown in implementation suggests that some of these factors need to be revisited and improved upon.

McKevitt and Braaksma (2007) outlined indicators of a successful PBS program with regard to a positive school culture. One of these factors was to have teachers communicate concise classroom expectations and offer regular instruction of behavioral guidelines and the social curriculum to students. Note that while regular instruction of the PBS expectations and the social curriculum may not necessarily reduce the amount of student infractions, educating the students is still advantageous as it encourages a consistent classroom culture and a better understanding between students and teachers. Aligned with the findings of McKevitt and Braaksma (2007), it could be surmised that the following recommendations would benefit Fitzpatrick students' daily conduct: (a) offering the students systematic school-wide instruction on proper deportment, school rules, and PBS expectations; and (b) teaching students how to manage their own behavior so they will ultimately mature into responsible and socially conscious adults—which is commonly referred to as the social curriculum

By age six, most children spend approximately seven hours per day at school, so it would benefit the students to learn the social curriculum at school as well as at home. Educating students in the social curriculum is part of what makes PBS a successful program (Turnbull et al., 2002; McKevitt & Braaksma, 2007; Skiba & Peterson, 2003) and this was lacking at Fitzpatrick. Note that a narrative about good citizenship differs somewhat from teaching children

the PBS expectations, though they overlap in many ways. For instance, a simple lesson in the social curriculum might occur when a child is giving an oral report and another student walks into class and cuts in front of the speaker. This would not be a specific transgression of a PBS expectation worthy of a signature, but one of many potentially valuable lessons regarding respectful behavior. Respect is a tenet of the PBS expectations, so the overlap would be evident.

Effective implementation of PBS to improve school climate. As previously mentioned, many of the staff members at Fitzpatrick admitted that they either had little or no training for the PBS program. They also remarked that they did not have any support system in place to offer them guidance when they felt uncertain about a policy or guideline. When administrators ask staff members to work within the confines of any organized discipline program without appropriate coaching or support from administration, then team-based implementation is not only problematic, but also ultimately unsustainable (Flannery & Sugai, 2006). This lack of coaching and support led to the breakdown of implementation at Fitzpatrick and resulted in students and teachers feeling uncertain about the program. This contributed to the lack of consistency and the students' lack of confidence in the system. Horner et al. (2010) noted that when PBS was implemented in middle schools with fidelity, it resulted in an increase of positive outcomes—such as a more favorable school climate, improved academic achievement, and a reduction of office detention referrals (ODRs), which are the primary reasons that Fitzpatrick introduced this program to begin with. These positive outcomes will not be realized at Fitzpatrick until the teachers and support staff receive the education and coaching required to make the program successful.

The interviews suggested that new strategies were needed to get the PBS program back on track and reduce problematic issues with inconsistencies. Some instructional strategies that

would greatly benefit Fitzpatrick Middle School were outlined in a study by Flannery, Fenning, Kato, and McIntosh (2013) include (a) administrative support, (b) regular and organized education of PBS expectations and the social curriculum for the students, (c) professional development to instruct teachers and support staff on best practices for PBS, (d) staff buy-in, and (e) establishment of a clear consequence for behavior issues with a protocol for referrals.

Teachers and students remarked that there were no clear consequences, and consistency and uniformity were needed. This would evolve from teachers receiving more education on the program, administrative support and ultimately the staff would have “buy in” because they would unify and integrate together.

With regular instruction of the PBS expectations, recognition of positive behavior and organized lessons on the social curriculum, problematic behavior decreased and the school climate would improve (Morrissey et al., 2010). In their interviews, Fitzpatrick teachers brainstormed ideas of efficient ways to present lessons on the expectations and social curriculum to the students. The study by Morrissey et al. (2010) also revealed that the process of providing the students and staff with assemblies, video productions, and organized classroom lessons in behavior brought the school together by preparing them with one unified agenda. Every staff member would therefore have the same opportunity to learn the workings and protocol of the program to lessen the probability of inconsistent implementation. This is something that the Fitzpatrick teachers aspired to, but were unable to do. The Fitzpatrick staff members who were interviewed suggested many of these same strategies for educating students on behavior and commented that introducing this structure would be a valuable asset to their program.

The teachers also reported that they needed more support and that they would value having a PBS committee or team to organize the program. Fitzpatrick already had an existing

PBS committee, but the members were only responsible for creating the classroom posters and for manning the PBS store, rather than organizing the educational process. Having a core leadership team to guide the PBS program would be another important practice for successful implementation at Fitzpatrick (Flannery et al., 2013; Morrissey et al., 2010). The leadership team could create positive universal school goals, which provide an essential tenet and pivotal cornerstone of the program. For instance, at Fitzpatrick Middle School, those goals are: “Be Respectful; Be Responsible; Be Careful” and the behavioral expectations evolve from these principles. Per Flannery and Sugai (2009), this process of embedding PBS training, via the leadership team, into organized staff development is critical for solid implementation. The leadership team could coordinate instructional staff development and lessons on the social curriculum to ensure that the staff would be well prepared for the school year. Flannery and Sugai (2009) noted that a leadership team would provide the skillful combination of all school training, continual reinforcement of lessons and strategies, and professional coaching. The outcome in this study was a compelling commitment from the staff and consistent practices with fidelity in implementation (Flannery & Sugai, 2009).

Lastly, it appears as if the administration did not solicit any input or feedback from the teachers or students on the program. Seeking out and integrating teacher and student input is a vital practice to ensure optimal results from PBS implementation (Flannery & Sugai, 2009). The teachers could possibly confer with the students to create lessons on behavior. Students and teachers could join together to form a PBS Support Group to set outcome goals for the school. Since Fitzpatrick has an advisory program in place, students could be chosen to represent each advisory and proactively offer input from their personal experiences, as well as insightful suggestions on their perspective regarding their feelings about the PBS program at school. The

students' suggestions could be incorporated into a school-wide plan for teachers and support staff and ultimately bring the school together for a unified program.

Conclusion and Recommendations

There is a need for faithful implementation with necessary supports in place for both students and educators. It would be advantageous for Fitzpatrick Middle School students to have a more structured and stable school environment with consistent policies regarding discipline. Good and Grouws (1977), Sugai and Horner (2002), and Farmer, Reinke, and Brooks (2014) all indicated that greater academic achievement can result from a proactive classroom management plan that is created with defined parameters and a framework of rules—which PBS provides. The teachers and students at Fitzpatrick Middle School were transparent about the need for stability and uniformity in the program. Consistency within the school is essential, and if the Fitzpatrick educators were provided with the tools to implement a well-organized discipline program, they would have more time to spend on lessons to educate the students in their academic areas. In their interviews, eighth grade students claimed that their teachers addressed discipline inconsistently, including the signing of planners and the allocation of reward coupons.

Dependent on available funding, the follow is an array of recommendations addressing school programming, educational policy, and teacher preparation:

- Within the teacher programs at colleges and universities, it would be advantageous to have required courses on school discipline and behavior management within the regular teacher education curriculum. This could also include optional classes to complete an in-depth study of the PBS and Response to Intervention (RTI) programs, as well as learning how to reconcile second or third tier behavioral issues. Moreover, when a teacher starts a position in a school, the programs will not be as difficult to

navigate. Of course, every school will have their own stipulations and conditions for implementation of these programs, but learning and understanding the basics of them in a teacher education program would be very beneficial.

- Currently, PBS is funded county-wide, and that narrows the scope to limited budgeting at the county level as there are many schools vying for a small amount of grant money. Currently, there are no grants available on the federal or state level to help schools start up the PBS program—including the necessary funding to provide the money for the requisite training and support that is necessary to have a successful program. Furthermore, the State’s Department of Education also no available funding for behavioral programs or education on classroom discipline. Regarding the Federal grants that are currently available, there are many allocated for the field of education, but there are no grants that target behavior in the schools. Given that this is such an important consideration now with police presence and metal detectors in many urban schools, it would seem appropriate for the federal and the state governments to rethink their policy for funding.
- Although much of the data in this study focused on the students and the teachers, it is important to note that the success of this program stems from the top, mirroring the “Trickle Down Effect” outlined by Zenger and Folkman (2016). Good leaders will increase engagement in their employees, and this translates to solid school administrators setting the example for their teachers to succeed. Administrators also need specialized training for behavioral management and PBS to provide teachers with the confidence, support, and resources necessary for them to do their best work with the students in the classroom.

- There were no programs or monitors in place to track the PBS program at Fitzpatrick to identify what practices may need improving, and what might need to be changed or eliminated within the program. Interventions must be put in place for administrators, teachers, and students to ensure that PBS is executed with fidelity and consistency before the problems progress to the point that nobody has trust or faith in the system. In order to actively address and work to prevent breakdowns in PBS implementation, practices must be developed to assess and carefully monitor the effectiveness and fidelity of implementation, as well as to identify measures that are ineffective or being improperly implemented. These practices should be regularly employed throughout the implementation process to highlight effective strategies and to identify and address breakdowns in the program as they occur.

Limitations

The limitations of this study include the selection of students, the time frame for the interviews, and the teachers available and willing to be interviewed. Further limitations include interviewing only eighth grade students and teachers for the data, rather than students from all three grades. The study focused on the students who continued to receive signatures and ODRs throughout their third year of middle school—including the entire eighth grade population would have most certainly changed the outcome of the study. Furthermore, only one middle school in the district was included in the study and given that there is a disparity in cultural representation throughout the middle schools, this might have made an additional difference in the data. Lastly, the perspectives of school administrators were not included in the study as they were unable to commit to participation during the period of research.

The background of the students and family information can be considered an additional limitation. Students were not questioned about their upbringing, and if in fact their parents were vigilant about teaching them good manners, demeanor, or how to behave in school and in public. The assumption was that this protocol is included within the social curriculum and students would benefit greatly from instruction and guidelines at school in the event that they are not learning etiquette and rules for good conduct in their home environment.

Lastly, it is implicit that my status as an educator in this school is a potential limitation. I imposed a potential influence as an 8th grade teacher and lunch host. Additionally, students are in my room daily for tutoring and as a respite from the cafeteria. Many of these students are in my math classes and although it was made very clear to students that the contents of their interviews would in no way impact their grades, they may have felt an inherent need to please me. Throughout the research process I kept this issue under consideration and took pains to keep the questioning and interviewing as neutral as possible. While there is no way to determine if my history in the school or with students has informed the responses of participants, I did my best to bracket my own experiences and responses while behaving in an objective and neutral manner during the interviews. I hope that all of the students felt comfortable enough to be candid and honest with their answers. Further, I employed triangulation with students and staff to crosscheck answers and to confirm earlier responses. I also used member checking via email to establish that my interpretations of their responses were accurate.

Recommendation for Future Research

Future research should document academic growth as well as the improvement in behavior, relating to the introduction of PBS to a school. The research on PBS usually pertains to setting up the program, what factors are needed for best practices, and how to organize the

educational segment of the program. Once the program is established, it would be wise to not only track the decrease of behavioral issues, but to see if that corresponds with the increase in academic achievement.

An additional research topic would be the examination of professional staff development, and how it could be formulated to correspond with educating teachers on classroom management and improving student behavior by teaching the social curriculum. This has not been definitively explored and would be a valuable addition to the PBS concept for implementation.

Final Reflections

The data revealed many valuable suggestions and much feedback from the teachers and students. I contacted the administration of Fitzpatrick and offered to give them suggestions to improve the program, something they had asked about at the onset of the study. However, as schools have more and more demands, my request somehow fell by the wayside. I have considered using what I learned from this and going forward as a volunteer for the county to help get PBS programs back on track. PBS is an incredibly worthwhile program and with appropriate staff training and coaching for implementation it can turn a school around, so assisting schools for best practices would be a valuable asset for the county.

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[good-and-bad-leadership](https://hbr.org/2016/01/the-trickle-down-effect-of-good-and-bad-leadership)

Appendix A: Positive Behavioral Support Student Interview

Introductory Questions:

Hello Student “A”, as you know, my name is Mrs. Walker, and I am going to be asking you some questions to help our school out with running the PBS program. I want to thank you so much for allowing me to talk to you and for taking the time out of your schedule to help me out.

- 1) First of all, I want to remind you that I am recording our entire conversation. Do you understand that?
- 2) I will not say your name at any time during our conversation and your identity will always remain a secret. Do you understand that?
- 3) This conversation and your answers to my questions have nothing to do with your grades in my class or any other class that you have at our school. Do you understand that?
- 4) Now tell me, do you have any questions whatsoever about what we are going to talk about here? Do you have any questions about this interview at all? Please understand that you are free to skip over any question that I ask you that you do not want to answer.

Interview Questions:

- 1) How long have you been at this middle school?
- 2) Do you understand what is expected of you at school regarding your behavior? **(No?)** Please explain why you might not know or understand the behavior rules at the school. **(Yes?)** Can you tell me what behaviors are expected in the classroom? Can you tell me what is expected of you when you are walking in the halls?
- 3) Do you know that the behavior guidelines at our school are posted in our classrooms, and they are called “PBS Expectations”? Do you ever look at the poster when you come into your classrooms? Do your teachers ever talk about them with your class?
- 4) Do you get reward coupons from teachers for your behavior? **(No?)** Do you see your teachers give out reward coupons for good behavior? **(Yes?)** For what behaviors do you or your classmates get a coupon? Can you give me an example of why you or a classmate might have gotten a coupon in the past week?

- 5) Do you understand the consequences of not following the PBS expectations at school? (Student will more than likely indicate that their planner will get signed.) Have you ever gotten a signature from a teacher? What was the signature for?
- 6) How many signatures do you have so far this year? Do you want to tell me why you got signatures from teachers? (Tardy, unprepared for class, safety, bullying, NBC rule etc.?)
- 7) The rules and guidelines at school should help students focus on learning. Do you notice other students not following classroom expectations and therefore disrupting the class?
- 8) Do your teachers ever tell you what behavior is expected of you? **(No?)** Would it help you if they went over the guidelines once a week? Would that make a difference in how you behave? **(Yes?)** What do the teachers say? How do they explain the PBS guidelines to you? Is it easier to have your teachers explain what they expect from you?
- 9) Tell me, do you have any more things to add or explain since our talk is coming to an end? **(Yes?)** Please, go ahead and explain to me what is on your mind. **(No?)** Thank you so much for taking the time to do this with me. I am very grateful for your help.

I want to remind you once again, that no matter what you have said to me, it will remain between you and me. Nobody will know your comments or your name. And your grades have nothing to do with our conversation, is this understood?

Appendix B: PBIS Self-Assessment Survey (Teacher/Staff)

Instructions:

This self-assessment survey is intended to guide the process of planning and implementing PBIS in your school. Your school's PBIS team will share the results with you.

Complete the survey independently. All staff responses will be compiled to create a school wide profile of each item. The survey is anonymous. It takes about 10 minutes to complete.

Base your ratings on your individual experiences in the school. If you do not work in classrooms, answer only the items that are applicable to you.

Read each item – then to the immediate right of the item, indicate your opinion of whether this feature is - *in place, working on it, or not in place.*

Indicate your response by filling in the appropriate circle completely. Use pen or No. 2 pencil.

I am a(n): Mark **one** choice only

General Education Teacher	0
Paraprofessional, Teaching Assistant	0
Electives Teacher	0
Professional Support Staff (Counselor, Psychologist, Social Worker, etc.)	0
Special Education Teacher	0

Used with permission from Wayne County RESA

	<u>Current Status</u>	
	In Place	Not in Place
1. A team exists and meets regularly for school wide behavior support planning and problem-solving.	0	0
2. A school administrator is an active participant on the school wide PBS team.	0	0
3. Data are collected and used (discipline summaries, surveys) to guide decision making about school-wide behavior interventions.	0	0
4. A small number (i.e., 3-5) of positive student behavior expectations have been identified school-wide for all students (e.g., be respectful, responsible, and safe).	0	0
5. Specific positive behavior expectations have been defined for all classroom settings.	0	0
6. Specific positive behavior expectations have been defined for non-classroom settings (e.g., hallways, cafeteria, playground, bathrooms, etc.).	0	0
7. Expectations are posted visibly in non-classroom settings (e.g., hallways, cafeteria, playground, bathrooms, etc.).	0	0
8. Expected student behaviors are taught directly by discussion, modeling, practice, and feedback in classroom settings.	0	0
9. Expected student behaviors are taught directly by discussion, modeling, practice, and feedback in non-classroom settings (e.g., hallways, cafeteria, etc.).	0	0
10. Expected student behaviors are rewarded regularly in classrooms.	0	0
11. Expected student behaviors are rewarded regularly in non-classroom settings.	0	0
12. Problem behaviors (both major and minor offenses) are defined clearly for both staff and students.	0	0
13. Consequences for problem behaviors are defined clearly for both staff and students.	0	0

Current Status

	In Place	Not in Place
14. Distinctions between office vs. classroom managed problems are clear to staff and students.	0	0
15. Staff actively supervise students in non-classroom settings.	0	0
16. A system for addressing problem behavior in non-classroom settings exists and is practiced by supervising staff.	0	0
17. There is adequate staff to supervise students in non-classroom, common areas.	0	0
18. Transitions (between classes, in hallways, and in non-classroom areas) are planned, taught to students, and are orderly.	0	0
19. A simple process exists for teachers to request and receive assistance for individual students with more significant problem behaviors.	0	0

20. List the situations that you have observed during the school day that most frequently lead to problem student behavior:

Location	Time (approximate)	Behavior
1.		
2.		
3.		

Appendix C: Positive Behavioral Support Teacher/Support Staff Interview

Introductory Questions:

Hello Teacher “A”, as you know, my name is Gina Walker, and I am going to be asking you some questions to help re-vamp the PBS program. I want to thank you so much for allowing me to talk to you and for taking the time out of your schedule to help me out; please accept this small gift card as a token of my appreciation.

- 1) First of all, I want to remind you that I am recording our entire conversation and to confirm that I have your permission to do so.
- 2) I will not say your name at any time during our conversation and your identity will always remain confidential.
- 3) Your responses to this interview will only be used for the purpose of this study, which is to find out how proper implementation of PBS can affect the classroom and ultimately, student achievement.
- 4) Do you have any questions whatsoever before we start? Thank you.

Interview Questions:

- 1) What is your understanding of the implementation of PBS within your classroom setting? How do you implement PBS in your classroom? Can you give me examples?
- 2) Have you had any training, coaching, or staff development regarding the implementation of PBS? **(Yes?)** If so, how long ago? Can you indicate what the training was? Have you attended a seminar or workshop? Has anyone given you parameters to follow, and if so, who would that be? **(No?)** Do you feel that training or a workshop would help you understand the PBS program better?
- 3) What are your greatest areas of concern regarding the PBS program at school? (If none, then skip to #6)
- 4) What assistance would you like to have to help you with these areas of concern? (Ask for specific examples – workshop? speaker at a staff meeting? Etc....)
- 5) Do you feel confident that our students understand what is expected of them, behaviorally? **(Yes?)** Why do you say that? Can you give me an example of this?

- 6) **(No?)** Why do you say that? Why do you feel that they don't understand what is expected of them?
- 7) Do you feel that the PBS guidelines are communicated to the students in a way that they understand? **(No?)** What makes you say that? Do you communicate the expectations to your students? If so, how often? If not, why not? Do you have any ideas you might send me to help us communicate these guidelines better? **(Yes?)** What makes you confident that the students have clear-cut guidelines regarding the PBS expectations?
- 8) Where do you see the most behavior transgressions? In your classroom? Passing time in the halls? In the computer lab? In the auditorium? Before school in the morning?
- 9) Approximately how many reward coupons do you give out in a week? Explain what behaviors warrant a reward coupon in your classroom. Who do you give these to? Is it different students? Do you find yourself giving coupons to the same students each week? Do you reward students with behavior problems when they have appropriate behavior? Do you reward the students who are generally well behaved and prepared each day for class? Can you give me examples of students that you give coupons to?
- 10) Generally, what do you do most often: sign students' planner, or give out reward coupons? **(Either answer)** Why do you feel that is the case?
- 11) Teaching children appropriate behavior is sometimes called teaching the "social curriculum." We teach the curriculum in our own classroom subject, but do you feel that you convey the social curriculum to your students, by teaching them good manners and PBS expectations?
- 12) Would you say that you have a "culture" in your classroom? **(Yes)** Can you describe the culture or atmosphere in your classroom? **(No)** Why do you feel that you don't have a classroom culture?
- 13) Is there anything else you would like to tell me about PBS or anything else pertaining to this interview?

Thank you so much for your help and your time; I am extremely appreciative. If necessary, would you object if I had to follow up with clarification or some additional questions?

Appendix D: Teacher/Support Staff Informed Consent

The University of Michigan-Dearborn
Positive Behavioral Support and Classroom Culture

Dear Teachers/Support Staff,

You have been asked to participate in this research study between the dates of February 1, 2016-June 1st, 2016. The purpose of this study is to seek information, opinions and suggestions regarding the Positive Behavioral Support at Pierce Middle School.

The manner of your participation will include the following: A questionnaire and one-on-one follow up interviews. Participation in this study is voluntary and will not affect your performance evaluation. You may skip or refuse to answer any questionnaire question without affecting performance evaluation. Your interview responses will be audio recorded. The recordings will be erased when the research is finished. There will be no risks to your participation in this study and you can withdraw at any time. The researcher will not disrupt the order of the instructional program at Pierce Middle School. Although you may not receive direct benefit from your participation, others may ultimately benefit from the knowledge obtained in this study. As a participant in this research study, the researcher believes that the information produced will improve the quality of implementation of PBS at Pierce. All information is confidential and will only be used for research purposes. Anonymity is assured as neither you nor your students' names will appear in any written reports that stem from data collected from the researcher. Information collected will be stored on the researcher's personal laptop and in a locked office.

If you have questions or concerns about this study, please contact Mrs. Gina Walker at walkermr@umich.edu or Dr. Martha Adler at maadler@umich.edu.

If you agree to participate in this study, please sign your name in the space provided below; you will be given a copy of this consent form for you to keep. If you would like to learn the findings of this study, please email me at walkermr@umich.edu and I will be happy to forward that information to you. Thank you for your participation in this study.

Printed Name

Signature

Please sign below if you are willing to have the one-on-one interview audio recorded. You may still participate in this study if you are not willing to have the interview recorded.

Signature

Date

Appendix E: Positive Behavioral Support Classroom Climate Student Assent Form

My name is Mrs. Walker. I am doing a research project where I am trying to find out your feelings about the Positive Behavioral Support Program at your school. Since you are the person affected by this program, I know you must have some opinions. If you would like, you can be in my study. If you agree, I will interview you and have you answer some questions about PBS. Your answers will be audio recorded so I can listen to them later in case I forget what you have said.

Other people will not know if you are in my study. I will put things I learn about you together with things I learn about other students, so no one can tell what things came from you. When I tell other people about my research, I will not use your name, so no one can tell whom I am talking about.

Your parents or guardian have to say it is okay for you to be in the study. After they decide, you get to choose if you want to do it too. If you do not want to be in the study, no one will be upset with you – it is completely your decision. If you want to be in the study now and change your mind later, that is also perfectly fine. You can stop at any time.

I will give you a copy of this form in case you want to ask questions later. When I am done with the research project, if you would like, I will be happy to share what I learned with you.

Agreement

I have decided to be in the study even though I know that I do not have to do it. Mrs. Walker has answered all my questions.

Name of Student

Signature of Student

Date

I am willing to have my voice recorded on a tape recorder.

Student Signature

Appendix F: Parental/Guardian Consent Form for Research Involving a Minor

The University of Michigan-Dearborn INFORMED CONSENT

Title of Project: Positive Behavioral Support and Classroom Climate

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Your permission is being sought to have your child participate in this research project. Please read the following information carefully before you decide whether or not to give your permission. There are no risks and the research can lead to improvements in the school behavioral program.

The study will be investigating the Positive Behavioral Support program at school, and classroom climate. Your child was chosen because I am trying to learn what changes need to be implemented at our school to ensure that all children have full knowledge of the PBS program and what is expected of them. Your child has received office detention referrals and can help me research this information. Your child will be interviewed by me and recorded for accuracy.

All information will be kept strictly confidential. At no time will any information be released to anyone outside the research staff. The recordings will be password protected, locked up and unavailable to anyone but me. The recordings will be erased when the research is finished. Your child's participation is voluntary. You can have your child drop out of the study at any time without any negative consequences. If at any time before, during or after the study your child experiences any discomfort that is a result of his/her participation, or if you have any questions about the study or its outcomes, please feel free to contact me, Mrs. Gina Walker.

University of Michigan Institutional Review Board has determined that this study is Exempt from IRB oversight.

If you have questions or concerns about this study, please contact Mrs. Gina Walker at walkermr@umich.edu or Dr. Martha Adler at maadler@umich.edu.

If you agree to have your child participate in this study, please sign your name in the space provided below; you will be given a copy of this consent form for you to keep. If you would like to learn the findings of this study, please email me at walkermr@umich.edu and I will be happy to forward that information to you. Thank you for providing consent for your child's participation in this study.

Printed Name

Consenting Signature

Relationship to Subject

Date