

12-3-2025

## Primary School Teachers' Perceptions on the Implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

Heather Page  
*Walden University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations>



Part of the [Early Childhood Education Commons](#)

---

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection at ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu](mailto:ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu).

# Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Heather Page

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
and that any and all revisions required by  
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee

Dr. Amy White, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty

Dr. Heather White, Committee Member, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost

Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University

2025

Abstract

Primary School Teachers' Perceptions on the Implementation of Positive Behavioral  
Interventions and Supports

by

Heather Page

MA, Walden University, 2016

BS, Lander University, 2006

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Education

Walden University

November 2025

## Abstract

Student disruptive behaviors are a growing problem affecting schools and teachers. Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS) is designed to help educators reduce disruptive students. The problem at a southeastern primary school was, despite implementing PBIS, teachers were concerned the model was ineffective in terms of managing students' disruptive behaviors. Framed using the PBIS model by Sugai and Horner, the purpose of this qualitative study was to examine teachers' perceptions regarding implementing the PBIS model for behavior modification and what was needed to improve the program. Data were collected from 11 primary school teachers in grades K-3 using semistructured interviews. An open coding process was used to analyze interviews and develop four themes. Teachers reported that the current implementation of PBIS is not generally effective, their use of PBIS to manage behaviors was inconsistent, there was a need for both individual and school-wide personal and professional support, and they required materials to implement PBIS fully. A white paper was developed that makes recommendations for the improved implementation of PBIS, and the support teachers need to better implement this model. The project may encourage positive social change if the recommendations are implemented, addressing factors hindering PBIS and providing school leaders with insights regarding improving the implementation of PBIS within their schools. Improving PBIS implementation may lead to less disruptive behaviors, more time spent on task learning and improved academic and social outcomes for young learners. In the broader education community, when disruptive behaviors are curbed, learning is improved, and students also learn soft skills such as self-management and self-control, which prepares them for success in school and life.

Primary School Teachers' Perceptions on the Implementation of Positive Behavioral  
Interventions and Supports

by

Heather Page

MA, Walden University, 2016

BS, Lander University, 2006

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Education

Walden University

November 2025

## Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my chair, Dr. Amy White, for her unwavering support, insightful guidance, and encouragement throughout this journey. Her wisdom and dedication carried me through each stage of the research and writing process, making this experience both meaningful and achievable.

I am profoundly grateful to my husband for his steadfast support, patience, and understanding. His belief in me has given me strength during the most challenging moments and reminded me of the importance of perseverance and purpose.

I also wish to thank my therapist, Maggie, whose compassionate guidance and support helped me stay grounded and emotionally resilient throughout this process. Her encouragement made an immeasurable difference in my well-being and my ability to see this project through to completion.

Above all, I thank God for His unending grace and direction. I am continually humbled by His presence in my life and give thanks for the path He laid before me, which has led to this significant milestone. I will always trust in Him.

Table of Contents

List of Tables ..... v

Section 1: The Problem..... 1

    The Local Problem..... 1

    Rationale ..... 2

        Evidence of the Problem in the Local Setting ..... 2

        Evidence of the Problem in Literature ..... 3

    Definitions of Terms ..... 4

    Significance of the Study ..... 5

    Research Questions ..... 6

    Review of the Literature ..... 6

        Conceptual Framework ..... 6

        Review of the Broader Problem..... 9

        Student Disruptive Behaviors ..... 10

        Implementing PBIS..... 12

        Barriers to Implementing PBIS..... 15

        PBIS Effects on Student Behavior ..... 21

        Instances Where PBIS was Ineffective ..... 23

    Implications..... 25

    Summary ..... 26

Section 2: The Methodology..... 27

    Qualitative Research Design and Approach ..... 28

    Participants..... 30

Criteria for Selecting Participants .....	30
Justification for Number of Participants .....	30
Procedures for Gaining Access to Participants .....	32
Establishing Researcher-Participant Relationship .....	32
Participant Rights and Protection.....	33
Data Collection .....	34
Justification for Data Collection .....	34
Data Collection Instrument .....	35
Sufficiency of Data Collection.....	36
Data Collection Process .....	37
Tracking Data.....	38
Role of Researcher .....	38
Data Analysis .....	39
Coding Procedures .....	39
Evidence of Quality and Procedures to Assure Accuracy and Credibility .....	43
Procedures for Dealing with Discrepant Cases.....	44
Data Analysis Findings .....	44
Themes Aligned with RQ1 .....	45
Themes Aligned with RQ2 .....	52
Summary .....	57
Section 3: The Project.....	59
Rationale .....	59
Review of Literature .....	60

White Paper.....	61
Professional Development .....	64
Standardized Tools and Practices .....	66
Enhancing Support Systems .....	67
Resources .....	71
Project Description.....	74
Needed Resources and Existing Supports.....	75
Potential Barriers and Solutions.....	76
Proposal for Implementation.....	79
Roles and Responsibilities of the Researcher .....	82
Project Evaluation Plan.....	82
Justification for Type of Evaluation .....	83
Goals of the Evaluation.....	83
Key Stakeholders .....	84
Project Implications .....	85
Summary .....	86
Section 4: Reflections and Conclusion .....	87
Project Strengths .....	88
Project Limitations.....	89
Recommendations for Alternative Approaches .....	91
Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change .....	92
Reflection on the Importance of the Work .....	94

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research .....	96
Summary .....	98
References.....	99
Appendix A: The Project .....	113
Appendix B: Interview Protocol .....	131
Appendix C: Thematic Analysis Table.....	134

## List of Tables

Table 1. Open Coding.....	40
Table 2. Axial Coding.....	41
Table 3. Thematic Coding.....	43

## Section 1: The Problem

Student disruptive behavior issues continue to be a challenge for schools and a concern for teachers. According to the Education Advisory Board (2019), teachers have reported an increase in behavioral disruptions since 2022. Teachers use different strategies and programs to reduce disruptive behaviors. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) is an evidence-based approach to help schools and teachers reduce these behaviors (McDaniel et al., 2018). Implementing PBIS is beneficial in terms of reducing these behaviors (Berg, 2021).

### **The Local Problem**

The problem at a southeastern primary school was despite implementing PBIS, teachers were concerned the model was ineffective in terms of managing students' disruptive behaviors. PBIS effectively reduces negative student outcomes and behavior issues, such as disruptions, discipline referrals, and suspensions (Bethune, 2017; Chitiyo & May, 2018; Yeung et al., 2016). However, teachers at this school have not consistently seen these outcomes.

The purpose of implementing PBIS is to enhance positive behaviors while decreasing negative behaviors (Sugai & Horner, 2020). However, incorrect implementation may jeopardize achieving and sustaining desired results (Chitiyo & May, 2018). To effectively implement PBIS, administrators must support teachers, including providing training time and necessary resources (Yeung et al., 2016). In schools implementing PBIS, teachers have indicated positive differences involving student behaviors (Leach & Helf, 2016).

## **Rationale**

The problem at a southeastern primary school was despite implementing PBIS, teachers were concerned the model was ineffective in terms of managing students' disruptive behaviors. Teachers must be equipped to handle disruptive behaviors, as such behaviors can directly hinder students' chances of success (Gage et al., 2018c). Moreover, disruptive student behaviors can reduce time students spend engaged in learning, directly affecting their academic success (Gage et al., 2018c; Saripah & Widiastuti, 2019).

PBIS is an approach that assists with managing student behavior concerns (Sugai & Horner, 2020). Implementing PBIS to address student behavioral concerns has been successful in schools (Noltemeyer et al., 2019). However, despite implementing PBIS at the study school, teachers have indicated they have yet to observe its effectiveness in terms of managing students' disruptive behaviors.

### **Evidence of the Problem in the Local Setting**

Teachers indicated that despite the implementation of PBIS, they were concerned the model was not effective in managing students' disruptive behaviors. According to PBIS committee monthly meeting minutes at the school under study, most student discipline referrals originate from the classroom, as teachers address disruptive behaviors in their own manner. According to the school's PBIS self-assessment survey report, teachers indicated consequences for problem behaviors were not clearly defined or consistent. Setting clear consequences for behaviors was just as important as defining clear behavioral expectations. Providing explicit instruction regarding behavioral

expectations and offering positive reinforcements for meeting expectations is a primary component of PBIS; however, when students have trouble meeting behavioral expectations, there is a need for consistent use of a hierarchy of supportive consequences which helps decrease problem behaviors and increases desired behaviors (Leach & Helf, 2016). Using a hierarchy of supportive consequences, purposefully teaching rules and procedures, and providing positive reinforcements can positively transform behaviors (Leach & Helf, 2016).

### **Evidence of the Problem in Literature**

Schools are facing a rise in disruptive student behaviors, which poses a serious challenge for educators. Primary school is the foundation for formal education, and students are expected to build essential developmental and social-emotional skills. However, disruptive or off-task behaviors and a lack of motivation can prevent students from acquiring these foundational skills (Saripah & Widiastuti, 2019). When students are disengaged and disruptive, they miss critical learning opportunities, and teachers are forced to redirect time and attention from instruction to behavior correction, often resulting in students being removed from class (Gage et al., 2018b). Without implementation of appropriate behavior interventions, these behaviors can intensify and lead to more serious issues over time (Chuang et al., 2020). Addressing these challenges early is crucial for supporting student development and ensuring productive learning environments for all.

Students who consistently engage in disruptive or off-task behaviors face several negative outcomes, including missed instructional time, strained interactions with

teachers, and disciplinary consequences. These patterns not only interfere with their academic growth but also place added pressures on teachers and school systems. In response to the increasing need for effective behavior supports, many schools across the country have adopted PBIS. When PBIS is implemented consistently and with fidelity, it can significantly decrease student disruptions and foster more positive school climates (Bethune, 2017; Childs et al., 2016; George et al., 2018). By promoting proactive strategies and clearly defined behavioral expectations, PBIS offers educators a research-based model to address behavioral challenges and improve outcomes for all students.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore teachers' perceptions regarding implementation of PBIS as a behavior modification strategy. In addition to examining experiences with current practices, I also sought to understand what teachers believe is necessary to enhance effectiveness and consistency of PBIS in their schools. Gaining insights regarding teachers' perspectives can reveal both strengths and challenges involving the model's application, offering guidance for improving fidelity and outcomes.

### **Definitions of Terms**

*Disruptive Behaviors:* Off-task behaviors involving activities unrelated to learning (Saripah & Widiastuti, 2019) as well as behaviors that may cause teachers and classmates to lose focus on instruction (Gage et al., 2018b).

*Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS):* An approach that accentuates system-wide and individual behavior interventions to help accomplish social and learning outcomes while preventing behavior problems (Sugai & Horner, 2006).

### **Significance of the Study**

Findings of this study may be significant to teachers and school leaders. This study will help lead to awareness of factors influencing effectiveness of PBIS, thereby benefiting school leaders in terms of improving implementation of PBIS within their schools. Teachers and school leaders may find results of this study helpful as they strive to understand PBIS implementation better. Findings highlight supports and barriers that can affect the program's success as well as insights regarding how they can be improved. This study may also be significant because it helps fill a gap in practice. While research shows PBIS is effective in terms of reducing disruptive behaviors, these results have not yet been observed at this school, making it essential to explore why this is the case and what changes are needed.

PBIS effectively reduces students' disruptive behaviors (Bethune, 2017; Chitiyo & May, 2018; Yeung et al., 2016). However, it has not been beneficial in terms of managing students' disruptive behaviors issues in the local setting. Positive social change could occur if study results help improve PBIS implementation. The study may lead to positive social change via identifying what teachers believe is needed to implement PBIS in a way that delivers all intended benefits. These benefits include reducing disruptive behaviors that lead to office referrals or suspensions, increasing time that is spent on instruction, increasing student engagement, and strengthening classroom management. When these areas improve, students have a greater opportunity to stay focused, learn more effectively, and experience long-term success in school settings.

## Research Questions

The problem at a southeastern primary school was despite implementing PBIS, teachers were concerned the model was ineffective in terms of managing students' disruptive behaviors. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine their perceptions of implementation of the PBIS model for behavior modification and what was needed to improve application of this program. The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What do teachers report about implementation of PBIS in their classroom?

RQ2: What are teachers' perceptions about what is needed to make PBIS an effective model for managing student behaviors in this school?

## Review of the Literature

I conducted an exhaustive search for literature using Academic Search Complete, PsycArticles, Education Source, ERIC, Google Scholar, SAGE Journals, and Teacher Reference Center. I used the following search terms: *positive behavior interventions and supports, teacher perceptions of PBIS, PBIS implementation, student disruptive behaviors, and Skinner's theory of operant conditioning.*

## Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework supporting this study was the PBIS framework developed by Sugai and Horner. PBIS is a preventive, positive, and systematic framework involving systemic and individualized strategies to achieve social and learning outcomes while reducing student behavioral disruptions (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012).

The PBIS framework operates via a multitiered system that is designed to prevent development of new problem behaviors, decrease frequency of ongoing disruptions, and minimize severity of persistent behaviors that interfere with learning (Rholetter, 2019; Simonsen & Sugai, 2019a; Sugai & Horner, 2020). PBIS interventions are delivered across three tiers, each offering different levels of behavioral support. According to the Center on PBIS (2023), Tier I is universal prevention, which involve establishing foundations for behaviors by offering consistent and proactive supports to all students to prevent unwanted behaviors. Tier II is targeted prevention, which involves providing focused support for students who have not responded to Tier I and are at risk for developing serious behavior challenges. Finally, Tier III is intensive prevention, in which individualized and intensive interventions are delivered for students who have not shown progress with Tier I and Tier II supports and require more specialized assistance.

Tier I includes explicit teaching of behavioral expectations, acknowledging appropriate behaviors through reinforcement, and consistent application of consequences (Strickland-Cohen et al., 2019). Tier II builds on those supports by increasing structure of daily routines, providing positive feedback and reinforcement, continuing instruction instruct on expectations, and monitoring student behavior data (Sugai & Horner, 2020). Tier III involves individualized behavioral supports that are tailored to students' needs, often involving functional assessments, student input, and school resources to help teach appropriate behaviors through use of behavior intervention plans (Simonsen & Sugai, 2019b; Strickland-Cohen et al., 2019; Sugai & Horner, 2020). These supports work

together to ensure students are identified early and matched with levels of intervention that best meet their needs.

PBIS is a structured framework that is used to guide selection and implementation of evidence-based practices through a tiered system of behavioral supports that involve improving students' social, emotional, and academic outcomes (Sugai & Horner, 2020). Rather than relying on punishment or exclusion, PBIS involves encouraging schools to respond to behavior challenges by teaching appropriate behaviors and reinforcing them through individualized supports (Tyre et al., 2018). This proactive approach involves helping all students succeed by promoting positive behaviors throughout school environments. The foundation of PBIS includes setting clear expectations, teaching students how to meet them, consistently recognizing positive behaviors, and using preventive strategies to reduce disruptions (Horner & Macaya, 2018; Simonsen & Sugai, 2019b; Strickland-Cohen et al., 2019). These practices are intended to be used by all school staff to ensure every student receives consistent support.

PBIS heavily draws on Skinner's theory of operant conditioning, which emphasizes positive reinforcement can be an effective way to change problem behaviors (Coskun, 2019). Operant conditioning is a learning process in which consequences of actions influence the likelihood of behaviors occurring again (McLeod, 2007; Skinner, 1963). Skinner applied this concept to behavior management by using reinforcers to encourage desired behaviors and punishers to decrease unwanted ones. According to McLeod (2007), a reinforcer increased the probability of a behavior being repeated, while a punisher reduced that probability. One of the most essential aspects of operant

conditioning involved immediate consequences; individuals were more likely to repeat behaviors that produced positive outcomes immediately (Coskun, 2019; McLeod, 2007). Operant conditioning controls behavior through reinforcement or punishment and can help decrease disruptive behaviors.

The PBIS framework involves reducing behavioral disruptions by teaching the students accountability through proactive measures. Teachers use procedures that are outlined in the framework to provide students with feedback on their behaviors and social skills (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012). Floress and Jacoby (2017) found as teachers increased their praise, there was a decrease in student disruptive behaviors. PBIS is used to identify evidence-based behavior practices, including posting rules, teaching expectations, monitoring behaviors, and feedback and reinforcement (Sugai & Horner, 2006). These strategies increased students' use of more positive behaviors while reducing behavioral disruptions (Childs et al., 2016; Pas et al., 2019). When teachers implement PBIS practices with fidelity, there is a reduction in student behavioral disruptions (Childs et al., 2016; Clonan et al., 2007; Houchens et al., 2017). This study involved examining teachers' experiences while implementing PBIS and its effectiveness in terms of managing student behaviors. I used the PBIS framework to frame research questions for this study.

### **Review of the Broader Problem**

The broader problem involved identifying behavior management strategies that effectively reduced student disruptive behaviors. Identifying and implementing effective behavior management strategies can be challenging for teachers (Camacho & Parham,

2019). Students are more successful when behavior management strategies are effectively identified and implemented (Gage et al., 2018a).

### **Student Disruptive Behaviors**

Disruptive student behavior remains a persistent challenge for schools. Camacho and Parham (2019) found that teachers' most significant challenge was managing students' disruptive behavior. According to Camacho and Parham, 48% of teachers reported encountering challenging student behavior weekly. A study conducted by Saripah and Widiastuti (2019) found that 60% of elementary school students engaged in some disruptive and off-task behaviors at a moderate rate, 24% at a low rate, and 16% at a high rate. Disruptive student behaviors are an issue in schools. Student disruptive behaviors can interfere with teachers' teaching abilities and hinder students' learning.

### ***Disruptive Behavior Effects on Learning***

Disruptive behaviors in the classroom can reduce valuable instructional time and negatively impact not only students engaging in those behaviors but also their peers (Gage et al., 2019; Horner & Macaya, 2018; Saripah & Widiastuti, 2019; Strickland-Cohen et al., 2019). When students act out, disruptions affect the entire class's learning environment, not just the individuals causing them (Gage et al., 2018b). Saripah and Widiastuti (2019) noted time spent managing disruptive behaviors often came at the expense of instructional time meant for academic engagement. When students exhibit disruptive behavior in the classroom, it indicates a lack of engagement in the learning process, which can adversely affect their success. Teachers must manage disruptive behaviors with methods that reduce classroom disruptions.

### *Efforts to Correct Disruptive Behaviors*

Managing students' disruptive behaviors can help create positive classroom environments. Teachers understand they must create positive atmospheres, maximize instructional time, and minimize behavioral disruptions. However, managing students' disruptive behaviors poses a challenge for teachers (Horner & Macaya, 2018). Lack of classroom management can be a significant obstacle to creating positive classrooms. Teachers have employed various methods to reduce disruptive behaviors in classrooms, including punitive and exclusionary approaches, as well as contingency-based discipline.

Although punitive and exclusionary discipline can negatively affect students, teachers still use these methods to control disruptive behaviors. Punitive discipline strategies such as suspensions and expulsions were effective, useful, and appropriate for addressing student misbehavior (Griffith & Tyner, 2019). Removing disruptive students contributed to safer learning environments and reduced the likelihood of future misbehaviors among other students (Griffith & Tyner). Punitive and exclusionary discipline strategies are often used to reduce disruptive behaviors and promote more positive learning environments by removing students from classrooms. However, this also separates students from instructional time, which can cause them to fall behind academically.

Another common classroom management approach used by teachers to address disruptive behaviors is contingency-based discipline, which involves applying reinforcements and consequences to shape student behaviors (DeJager et al., 2020; Wills et al., 2021). Positive contingency approaches, in which students received reinforcement

for appropriate behaviors, were more effective at reducing disruptive behaviors than negative approaches alone (DeJager et al.). Combining both positive and negative strategies resulted in even greater reductions involving disruptive student behaviors (DeJager et al.).

Using positive and negative reinforcers can help encourage acceptable behaviors and decrease problem behaviors; however, using negative reinforcers may not yield long-term effects. Wills et al. (2021) found using contingency-based approaches enabled teachers to effectively teach behavioral expectations and reinforce appropriate behavior, resulting in improvements in academic performance and behavior. There was a 30% increase in on-task behaviors when teachers consistently used praise and reinforcement to acknowledge positive student actions (Wills et al.). Teachers who used reinforcement instead of punishment to manage disruptive behaviors often experienced fewer behavioral issues and kept students in classrooms (DeJager et al., 2020; Wills et al.).

### **Implementing PBIS**

Schools are continually working to create safe and supportive environments that promote student success. One widely used approach to support this is PBIS, a tiered framework designed to meet students' behavioral needs through structured, evidence-based practices. Thousands of schools across the country have implemented PBIS to improve behavior outcomes by offering varying levels of support based on student needs. This growing use of PBIS reflects a shift toward proactive and schoolwide systems that promote positive behavior and strengthen school climate.

Effective implementation of PBIS relies heavily on teachers, whose consistent use of its strategies is key to reducing disruptive behaviors. Tyre et al. (2018) found that implementing PBIS with fidelity led to a noticeable reduction in student disruptive behaviors. To ensure the successful implementation and effectiveness of PBIS, administrators must provide teachers with support through training and ongoing coaching. PBIS emphasizes the importance of all teachers having the expertise to implement PBIS and, through training, this can be established (Yeung et al., 2016). Equipping teachers with proper training supports schools in reaching a level of PBIS implementation that leads to improved student behavior outcomes (Horner & Macaya, 2018; Judkins et al., 2019). Schools that prioritize teacher preparation are more likely to see consistent use of PBIS strategies and improved behavioral outcomes across classrooms.

Training plays a critical role in the successful implementation of PBIS. While examining the role of school teams in preparing staff, Judkins et al. (2019) found providing teachers with training significantly improved implementation outcomes. Similarly, Horner and Macaya (2018) conducted a randomized trial and found that schools offering teacher training implemented PBIS strategies more effectively. Oakes et al. (2020) found teachers who applied strategies to support students' behavioral needs were more effective overall and less likely to rely on punitive practices. In the study, 61 teachers were surveyed after receiving training, and the results showed most felt confident in their ability to manage behavior. The researchers believed they had the necessary knowledge and skills needed for effective classroom management. The study's

findings highlight the importance of training as a foundation for building teacher confidence and strengthening behavior support in schools.

To ensure the effective and appropriate implementation of PBIS, administrators need to provide teachers with continuous and ongoing support. To accomplish this, administrators have utilized coaching to ensure the accuracy of implementation (Bethune, 2017; Massar et al., 2022). In a study examining the effects of coaching on teachers' implementation accuracy, Bethune found a direct correlation between the coaching process and successful implementation. Some teachers require additional support when implementing new initiatives, such as PBIS. Therefore, coaching is key to supporting PBIS implementation (Massar et al.). Massar et al. examined the effects of coaching on teachers' implementation of PBIS strategies to reduce disruptive behaviors. Researchers observed eight elementary teachers and found, when provided with coaching, they increased the implementation of PBIS strategies, resulting in reduced disruptive behaviors. By providing teachers with continuous support through coaching, teachers can improve their implementation accuracy. In a similar study evaluating whether teachers' implementation of proactive strategies increased after receiving coaching, Reinke et al. (2014) showed teachers' implementation significantly improved. In addition, Bethune and Massar et al. noted after teachers received training and coaching, there was a reduction in office discipline referrals. Therefore, implementing PBIS with accuracy is a key component of its success. Research on the implementation of PBIS has shown that providing teachers with support through training and coaching promotes successful implementation and reduces disruptive behaviors.

To successfully implement PBIS and reduce disruptive student behavior, it is essential to establish and teach clear behavioral expectations. Implementing PBIS begins with establishing and teaching clear behavioral expectations for students (Lewis & Sugai, 2017). In a comparative study of two elementary schools examining how teachers interpret PBIS implementation, Clayton et al. (2020) reported teachers viewed establishing clear expectations as essential for successful implementation of the framework. The findings of Clayton et al. supported those of Petrusek et al. (2022). While highlighting core features of the PBIS framework, Petrusek et al. indicated establishing clear behavioral expectations among the school and teaching those expectations to all students is required for successful implementation. Similarly, to better understand the implementation of PBIS and the components essential for student success, Molloy et al. (2013) found defining and correctly teaching students' behavioral expectations reduced disruptive behaviors. For PBIS implementation to be successful and reduce disruptive behaviors, clear behavioral expectations must be established and consistently taught.

### **Barriers to Implementing PBIS**

Despite research supporting PBIS, schools have low and unsustainable implementation rates (Chitiyo & May, 2018; Tyre et al, 2018). Studies have shown that student disruptive behaviors significantly declined during the first year of implementing PBIS. However, in the following year, the incidence of such behavior increased, even surpassing the initial baseline (Yeung et al., 2016). This trend indicated that for PBIS to remain effective, ongoing training and support are crucial (Chitiyo & May, 2018; Nichols et al., 2020; Strickland-Cohen et al., 2019; Tyre et al., 2018). For schools aiming to adopt

PBIS comprehensively, it is essential to equip teachers with adequate training and continuous support to build their confidence and deepen their understanding of its objectives (Chitiyo & May, 2018; Robertson et al., 2020; Tyre et al., 2018; Yeung et al., 2016). Furthermore, research emphasizes that the long-term success of such initiatives depends on teachers' competence and proficiency in implementation (Strickland-Cohen et al., 2019). Therefore, identifying the factors that hinder implementation is essential for improving its effectiveness. The literature points to several key barriers, including teacher confidence, administrative support, consistency, and teacher perceptions.

### ***Teacher Confidence***

One indicator of improved PBIS outcomes is teachers' confidence in its implementation. A teacher's lack of confidence in implementing a new intervention or program can lead to reluctance (Nichols et al., 2020). In a review of barriers to the successful implementation of PBIS, Berg (2021) noted a lack of teacher confidence often presents a barrier. Berg's research supported a study by Chitiyo and May (2018), which surveyed 57 teachers and examined the relationship between teacher confidence and the sustainability of PBIS. Teachers reported difficulties implementing PBIS because they were not confident in using the interventions. When teachers are not confident in implementing the program, they may overlook critical components impact its effectiveness. Nichols et al. conducted a comparative study of schools implementing PBIS. They found teachers at schools with higher levels of implementation reported greater confidence in their ability to use strategies promoted positive student behavior than those working in schools with lower levels of implementation. Based on research, a

lack of teacher confidence in the practices they use contributed to unsuccessful implementation (Berg, 2021; Chitiyo and May, 2018; Nichols et al., 2020).

### ***Administrative Support***

One of the most significant barriers to implementation is the need for administrator support in the classroom. The effectiveness of an intervention can be measured by how teachers implement it over time. Therefore, school administrators must support teachers to ensure the effective implementation of practices (Strickland-Cohen et al., 2019). Six teachers were surveyed to determine perceived barriers to PBIS implementation, a lack of administrator support was identified as a key barrier (Strickland-Cohen et al., 2019). All study participants emphasized the importance of school administrators' support during implementation. Based on the study's results, two teachers indicated having the administrators was helpful, with one noting their administrator provided them with the time they needed to meet with students who needed additional behavioral support. However, other teachers described administrator support as a barrier because administrators lacked understanding of the behavioral interventions associated with PBIS (Strickland-Cohen et al., 2019).

Additionally, Tyre et al. (2018) found a lack of administrative support was a significant barrier to teachers' implementation of PBIS. The researchers analyzed survey data from teachers who expressed their concerns about PBIS. 70% of teachers reported needing adequate support to implement PBIS effectively. A lack of administrator support can hinder the implementation of PBIS. While researching the perceptions of 44 staff, Feuerborn et al. (2018) found that 30% of participants perceived a lack of administrator

support as a serious concern in implementing PBIS. Research shows that school administrators are vital to the successful implementation of PBIS and to teachers' perceptions. Administrators' support is a critical component in implementing PBIS; with this support, implementation will be successful (Tyre et al., 2018).

### ***Consistency***

PBIS is a schoolwide approach requiring the support of all staff members. Teacher buy-in is critical for the successful implementation of PBIS, and researchers have found it is also one of the most significant barriers to implementation (Berg, 2021; Feuerborn & Chinn, 2012; Filter et al., 2016; Macy & Wheeler, 2020). In a qualitative study examining teacher buy-in, Macy and Wheeler (2020) found more consistency could have been achieved. Consistency is the key to successfully implementing PBIS (Center on PBIS, 2023). During interviews, one teacher commented that the lack of consistency in implementation throughout the school year is the reason for their lack of support and buy-in. Another teacher reported inconsistent implementation, which interfered with teacher buy-in. Teachers also indicated they observed the sporadic implementation of PBIS as an initiative.

Tyre and Feuerborn (2017) analyzed responses from teacher surveys, which revealed 39% of teachers who did not support PBIS implementation. Teachers cited inconsistency as the reason for their lack of buy-in. Teachers also indicated some of their colleagues were not committed to PBIS, prompting a need to implement PBIS practices. In a more recent study, 53% of teachers reported PBIS implementation was inconsistent

within the school, directly affecting both the program's effectiveness and their support (Robertson et al., 2020).

Additionally, Tyre et al. (2020) selected 108 participants to respond to an open-ended question. The study aimed to analyze teachers' concerns with the principles and practices of PBIS. Based on the data, 37% of teachers reported concerns about their colleagues' implementation of PBIS. These teachers were also concerned their colleagues did not support or implement PBIS. Based on the results of these studies, teachers express reluctance to support PBIS implementation when it is inconsistent across the school and when colleagues offer limited support.

### ***Teachers' Perceptions***

The successful implementation of PBIS relies heavily on teachers; therefore, securing their support is essential. Studies have shown that teachers' perceptions significantly influence their willingness to support and effectively implement PBIS practices (Feuerborn & Chinn, 2012; Griffith & Tyner, 2019; Sugai & Simonsen, 2012; Tyre & Feuerborn, 2017). A core pillar of PBIS is that a student's behavior is influenced by the environment, including events before and after the behavior. By modifying the environment, the behavior can also be altered (Sugai & Horner, 2006). Tyre and Feuerborn (2017) analyzed teachers' statements opposing the implementation of PBIS and found, teachers were not in favor of implementation due to the belief that teaching behavioral expectations was not their responsibility. Robertson et al. (2020) surveyed over 600 teachers and found teachers' beliefs about students' behavior conflicted with PBIS principles. Many believed students' behaviors could not be addressed through PBIS

because they stemmed from factors beyond their control. As a result, interventions and reinforcements were seen as ineffective. Similarly, teachers in a study exploring perceptions of behavior and discipline stated they did not view behavioral support as part of their job responsibility (Feuerborn et al., 2018). When teachers attribute behaviors to external causes and overlook the possibility that behaviors serve a function, they become less likely to teach appropriate alternatives or implement interventions to address them (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012).

PBIS is designed to decrease disruptive behaviors by actively teaching and reinforcing positive alternatives (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012). However, some educators remain hesitant to adopt these strategies (Chitiyo & Wheeler, 2009). Teachers' perceptions of reinforcement can influence their use of PBIS. While observing teachers in kindergarten through third-grade classrooms, Floress and Jacoby (2017) found that teachers used lower praise rates and more reprimands. Teachers who used praise and positive reinforcement reported the methods were ineffective (Floress & Jacoby, 2017). While examining why teachers fail to use positive reinforcement when addressing disruptive behaviors, Nelson and Kauffman (2020) found that teachers were more likely to focus on negative behaviors than on reinforcing positive ones. This research reflects a broader trend in classroom management, in which corrective responses are often prioritized over preventive or encouraging strategies.

Some teachers do not agree with rewarding students for meeting expectations and worry rewarding students for expected behaviors will undermine their intrinsic motivation (Tyre & Feuerborn, 2021). In an article discussing teachers' concerns about

implementing PBIS, Tyre and Feuerborn stated teachers perceived the use of rewards and reinforcements as undermining students' intrinsic motivation to do the right thing. When students learn that certain behaviors can lead to extrinsic rewards, they will engage in those behaviors only to receive rewards, resulting in a decrease in intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Kohn (1993) also asserted the use of rewards causes people to do things only for what they expect to get in return. Kohn agreed with Deci and Ryan that extrinsic rewards negatively affect intrinsic motivation.

### **PBIS Effects on Student Behavior**

Researchers have found that PBIS is associated with improved student behavior. For example, studies have indicated PBIS is associated with improved student behavior, reduced discipline referrals, and fewer suspensions (Gage et al., 2018a, 2018c; James et al., 2019; Noltemeyer et al., 2019). Still, some studies have not found significant positive relationships between PBIS and student behavior (Feuerborn et al., 2018; Gage et al., 2018b; Nelson & Kauffman, 2020; Ryoo et al., 2018). These mixed findings indicate that outcomes are not always consistent and often depend on factors such as the thoroughness of PBIS implementation, staff engagement, and the level of resources available in the school.

### ***Student Behaviors***

PBIS serves as a behavior modification framework designed to enhance student behavior. Noltemeyer et al. (2019) found a correlation between implementing PBIS and a reduction in problem behaviors among students. In a related study, Childs et al. (2016) also observed a decrease in disruptive behaviors in schools that adopted PBIS,

reinforcing these findings. Expanding on the behavioral impact, Pas et al. (2019) examined 109 elementary teachers and found that the use of proactive behavior management strategies was associated with increased positive student behaviors. The more frequent use of these strategies resulted in a greater display of expected behaviors by students. Together, these studies demonstrate how combining PBIS with consistent, proactive classroom management practices can improve student behavior and reduce disruptions.

### ***Discipline Referrals***

Research has demonstrated a strong correlation between implementing PBIS and improved student behavior. Childs et al. (2016), in a four-year study of 724 elementary schools, found schools with strong implementation experienced fewer office discipline referrals (ODRs). In a more recent longitudinal study, Kim et al. (2018) reported 78% of schools implementing PBIS successfully saw a decrease in ODRs. Both studies highlight how effective PBIS implementation can lead to positive behavioral changes by reducing disciplinary incidents.

### ***Suspensions***

Elementary schools implementing PBIS have demonstrated notable reductions in student suspensions (Gage et al., 2018c, 2019; James et al., 2019). For instance, James et al. examined 21 elementary schools across the United States and observed a decline in suspension rates following the implementation of PBIS. Supporting this trend, Gage et al. also reported decreased suspensions in schools that applied the PBIS framework. Gage et al. compared suspension rates in schools implementing PBIS with those in schools that

did not. Research indicated that schools using PBIS experienced notably fewer suspensions than those not using it.

Additionally, A systematic review of four studies assessed how PBIS influences the use of exclusionary consequences for students. According to Gage et al. (2018c), PBIS implementation had no significant effect on the use of exclusionary approaches; however, there was a decrease in suspensions, which could indicate that teachers need more training in addressing disruptive behaviors rather than relying on exclusionary approaches to remove students from the classroom. Finally, Gage et al. (2018b) examined how teachers implemented evidence-based classroom management strategies compared to the effects on student disruptive behaviors. Building on this, Anderson et al. (2019) evaluated the effects of suspension reduction policies. Researchers found that students who were suspended continued to show poor behavioral outcomes, including increased misbehavior and disengagement from school. These findings underscore the ineffectiveness of exclusionary discipline in addressing the root causes of behavior and highlight the importance of prevention-oriented approaches, such as PBIS.

### **Instances Where PBIS was Ineffective**

Although research supports the implementation of PBIS, which has successfully helped reduce disruptive student behaviors and can lead to reduced exclusionary discipline, there are instances where it has been ineffective. Ryoo et al. (2018) examined the impact of PBIS on behavior issues among elementary school students and observed no notable effects. When comparing suspension rates between PBIS and non-PBIS schools, Ryoo et al. (2018) found that although the number of suspensions due to student

disruptive behaviors decreased, the difference was not statistically significant. Likewise, a review of elementary school studies examined the effect of PBIS on reducing the use of exclusionary discipline practices for students who exhibited disruptive behavior. Gage et al. (2018b) found PBIS had no impact on student exclusion rate consequences. Based on these studies, it can be determined that not all schools implementing PBIS have demonstrated improvements in student behavior or the utilization of exclusionary discipline approaches. Proponents of PBIS claim it improves student behavior and reduces suspensions and other exclusionary discipline practices; however, these studies found that PBIS was ineffective at reducing student behavior problems and exclusionary discipline.

Racial disparities exist, even in schools implementing PBIS (Santiago-Rosario et al., 2022). Many researchers have found that implementing PBIS effectively reduced disruptive behaviors; however, a few studies indicated racial disparities remained evident. Baule (2020) examined the effect of PBIS implementation on suspensions and found that although PBIS substantially reduced behavioral disruptions leading to suspensions, significant racial disparities persisted. After implementing PBIS for three years, data showed 21% of white students received one or more days of suspension compared to 33% of multiracial and 40% of black students. The disparity between the number of white students suspended compared to the number of minority students was still substantial after the implementation of PBIS (Baule, 2020). Researchers examined behavior patterns in implementing and non-implementing schools to understand PBIS's potential to decrease racial disparities (McIntosh et al., 2014). McIntosh et al. found that

13% of black students receive out-of-school suspension (OSS) for disruptive behaviors in non-implementing schools compared to 11% in schools implementing PBIS. Researchers also found that only 3% of white students receive OSS for disruptive behaviors in non-implementing and implementing schools. Although results show the rates of OSS were lower in schools implementing PBIS, significant racial disparities are still prevalent. These studies provide evidence that racial disparities still exist in schools, even with the implementation of PBIS.

### **Implications**

Findings from this study may provide teachers and school leaders with data to better understand the factors associated with PBIS effectiveness in the study school. School leaders could make data-driven decisions about implementing PBIS to improve student disruptive behaviors. Teachers could be informed on how to implement PBIS components to support positive student behavior. Findings from this study may indicate what is required to implement PBIS and reduce student disruptive behaviors effectively. The successful implementation of PBIS may reduce disruptive behaviors, increasing instructional time (Chitiyo & May, 2018).

After analyzing the data collected in this study, I created a project outlining the professional learning teachers need at the local school. This project will provide resources related to effectively implementing PBIS to help reduce student disruptive behaviors and encourage more positive behaviors. PBIS emphasizes managing the learning environment through teaching replacement behaviors to decrease issues and support learning. Effectively implementing PBIS can bring positive outcomes for

students and the school (Berg, 2021). Addressing teachers' needs through professional learning focused on classroom management strategies can significantly improve student behavior (Lewis & Sugai, 2017). This project will empower teachers to create a more positive, structured, and engaging classroom environment for all learners.

### **Summary**

In section 1, I introduced the problem that, despite implementing PBIS, teachers were concerned the model was ineffective in managing students' disruptive behaviors. I also included evidence of this problem locally and in the literature. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the PBIS model for behavior modification and what was needed to improve its application. Section 1 included a review of current literature relevant to the study and a conceptual framework. I conclude Section 1 with a discussion of implications for the possible direction of the study. Section 2 will present the methodology used to conduct the study and the qualitative research design and approach. Section 2 will also discuss the criteria and justification for participant selection.

## Section 2: The Methodology

In this study, I examined teachers' perceptions of implementing the PBIS model for behavior modification and what was needed to improve its application. Section 2 describes the research I used to investigate the problem. For this study, I gathered data by conducting interviews to answer the research questions:

RQ1: What do teachers report about the implementation of PBIS in their classroom?

RQ2: What are teachers' perceptions about what is needed to fully implement the PBIS model for managing student behavior?

I used a qualitative research design to capture participants' perceptions of the implementation of PBIS to reduce disruptive behaviors and to identify areas for improvement (Butin, 2010; Glesne, 2016). Using a basic qualitative research design provided a closer look at teachers' perceptions and helped them better understand their experiences with the program. The population from which I drew participants for this study included primary school teachers (Grades K-3) who volunteered for an interview. I asked those selected to participate in the study to participate in semistructured interviews with open-ended questions, allowing for more in-depth discussion (Yin, 2014). During a semistructured interview, the researcher and the interviewee discussed the research study's questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Section 2 explains why a qualitative research approach was appropriate for this study. I also describe how participants were selected and the procedures I used to access them. I discuss methods used to establish a working relationship with participants and the

measures taken to protect the confidentiality and rights of all participants. Finally, I addressed the tools used to gather data and how the data were analyzed.

### **Qualitative Research Design and Approach**

In this study, I examined teachers' perceptions of implementing the PBIS model for behavior modification and what was needed to improve its application. I determined that a qualitative research design was appropriate for this study because it enabled me to collect data on participants' perceptions (Creswell, 2012b). The problem prompting this study was that, despite implementing PBIS, teachers were concerned the model was ineffective in managing students' disruptive behaviors. According to Creswell (2012b), researchers conduct qualitative research to explore a problem or issue. Therefore, a qualitative design was used to examine teachers' perceptions and understand the phenomenon by answering what and how questions (Creswell, 2012a).

When determining the research design for this study using a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods approach were considered. According to Yin (2014), choosing an appropriate research approach is critical to the success of the study. To determine which research approach was most appropriate for the study, the research questions, the data needed, the methods of data collection, and the possible sample size were considered (Creswell, 2012a). After considering these factors, it was determined a quantitative approach was inappropriate for this study because the purpose of the research was not to confirm a measurable hypothesis, collect numerical data from a large sample size, or analyze a trend (Creswell, 2012a). Furthermore, because the study did not require

qualitative or quantitative data to answer the research questions, it was concluded that a mixed-methods approach was also inappropriate.

After determining which research method was most suitable for this study, the various qualitative research designs were examined to identify the most suitable one. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) described six common qualitative approaches: narrative inquiry, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, basic qualitative research, and case study. Upon reviewing the core features of each, a basic qualitative design was the most appropriate fit. This design focuses on understanding how individuals interpret their experiences, construct meaning, and make sense of their world (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Since the study aimed to explore teachers' perceptions of challenges in PBIS implementation and their views on needed improvements, the basic qualitative approach provided a framework for gaining in-depth insight into their experiences. Through interviews, this design supported a deeper exploration of participants' perspectives and the context surrounding their experiences with PBIS.

I considered narrative analysis, phenomenology, grounded theory, and ethnography as approaches for the research design in this study but found them inappropriate. A narrative analysis was not suitable for this study, as the research did not involve gathering personal stories or focusing on the chronological sequencing of participants lived experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Phenomenology, as described by Grosseohme (2014), centers on understanding the meaning of a shared experience among a specific group. Since my study did not aim to capture a singular, common experience but rather individual perspectives on PBIS implementation, the

phenomenological approach was also deemed inappropriate. The grounded theory approach was also inappropriate since I needed to focus on collecting data to construct theories. Ethnography focuses on understanding the culture of a specific group. At the same time, a case study is better suited to understanding a particular person, event, or process, and focuses on a single group (Yin, 2014). Finally, because the unit analysis of this study was about teachers' perceptions of implementing PBIS, the other qualitative research approaches did not apply (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

## **Participants**

### **Criteria for Selecting Participants**

The participants selected for this study consisted of certified general education teachers in grades K-3 who worked at the study school and had been teaching for at least one full year using PBIS. Since all schools in the district have implemented PBIS, all teachers have received training in its implementation. Therefore, the selected teachers served as the primary research data source because they had firsthand experience implementing PBIS and could provide the necessary information to address the research questions.

### **Justification for Number of Participants**

To select participants for the study, convenience sampling was used. Creswell (2012a) explains that convenience sampling involves selecting participants who are readily available and willing to take part in the study. Therefore, participants were selected based on their willingness to participate in the study. This method enabled

efficient gathering of relevant insights while working within the practical limitations of time and access.

The school had 16 teachers who taught in Grades K–3: four kindergarten teachers, four first-grade teachers, four second-grade teachers, and four third-grade teachers. All 16 teachers were invited to participate because they met the study's general requirements. However, only 13 met the specific criteria of being full-time general education teachers who had been trained in and implemented PBIS for at least one year. Every effort was made to gain the participation of all 13 eligible teachers.

To achieve saturation, I aimed to recruit a minimum of eight to ten teachers from the study school to participate in this study. The faculty at this school was extremely cooperative, and I had an excellent working relationship with them. Undoubtedly, enough participants agreed to be interviewed. However, the sample size was small but consistent with qualitative research requirements (Creswell, 2012a). Ritchie (2014) indicated the sample size for qualitative research is usually small. Therefore, using fewer participants is more effective when conducting qualitative research. According to Patton (2015), a small sample size can yield in-depth insights into the study.

The participants selected for this study were full-time general education teachers who had been trained in and were implementing PBIS in the study school for at least one year. Based on this criterion, I ensured that the information provided by the participants was relevant to addressing the study's objectives.

### **Procedures for Gaining Access to Participants**

After obtaining approval from the Walden Institutional Review Board (12-11-23-0169966), I emailed the school's county office to request approval to conduct the study. After getting approval from the county office, I contacted the school's principal to discuss the details of the study and request permission to contact teachers in grades K-3. Following the principal's approval, I accessed the school's website to gather teacher email addresses. Finally, an invitation was emailed to each participant where I introduced myself, provided an overview of the study, and asked them to respond if they were interested in participating.

### **Establishing Researcher-Participant Relationship**

I established a researcher-participant relationship by creating an honest relationship with all participants before conducting the study. Once teachers expressed interest in the study, I sent a second email to thank them for their time and interest, shared my interest in conducting it, and provided more detailed information. Additionally, I reviewed participant rights and responsibilities, encouraged participants to ask questions for clarification, and provided a consent form. Further, I provided participants with my contact information (email and phone number) if they felt more comfortable communicating by those means. Finally, I informed teachers they could provide another email address for future communication to maintain confidentiality.

I gave each teacher one week to reply to the email with "I consent," acknowledging they consented to participate in the study. Then, if needed, I sent

reminder emails asking if teachers needed additional details about the study or had questions that would aid them in making their decision.

After teachers returned the signed consent form, I emailed them individually, thanking them for their time and explaining participation would involve a 30–45 minute interview. To allow participants the opportunity of flexibility and show them I understood their time was valuable, I conducted in-person interviews at a location convenient for the participant or on a virtual platform like Google Meet, as each participant indicated their preference. During the actual interview, I continued to establish the relationship by reviewing informed consent, reassuring participants all data would be confidential and not stored at the school site, and asking them if they had any questions before beginning the interview.

### **Participant Rights and Protection**

I informed all participants I would not disclose their identities to ensure confidentiality. I used alphanumeric codes (T1, T2) when referring to the participants, ensuring not to connect them with the participants' race, gender, name, or grade level taught. Participating in a study must be voluntary, and the right to decline participation should be given (Creswell, 2012a). I reminded teachers participation in the study was voluntary and they could decline anytime. Further, I assured each participant their participation in the study would remain confidential. To maintain confidentiality, participants had the option to schedule interviews at a convenient time, which allowed them to participate in the interview at a location other than the school.

## **Data Collection**

I gathered data for this basic qualitative study by interviewing participants to examine their perceptions of implementing the PBIS model for behavior modification and their perceptions of what was needed to improve the application of this program. In educational settings, interviews are the most frequently used method for qualitative data collection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Therefore, semistructured interviews, which served as the primary data source, were the tools I used to collect data for this study.

### **Justification for Data Collection**

Qualitative research is a methodology used to understand participants' experiences, opinions, and perceptions (Creswell, 2012a). I conducted interviews to collect data for this study. I gathered data to examine teachers' perceptions on the implementation of PBIS for behavior modification and their perception of what was needed to improve the application of this program. I created open-ended questions before conducting interviews. According to Creswell (2012a), interviews comprise a few open-ended questions to explore participants' views and opinions. Qualitative research aims to understand the experiences of individuals, and the use of interviews provides a platform for participants to express their thoughts and feelings freely, resulting in a wealth of information (Charmaz, 2014). Collecting data through interviews is essential for basic qualitative research studies as it enables a researcher to collect in-depth and detailed data directly from experienced participants.

## **Data Collection Instrument**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the PBIS model for behavior modification and their perceptions of what was needed to improve the application of this program. To collect data for this study, I conducted interviews. Interviews are the most common data collection tool when conducting qualitative studies in education (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Interviews were the only data collection instrument needed to answer the study's research questions.

### ***Interviews***

In qualitative research, interview questions revolve around a study, and the conversation is highly structured, semistructured, or unstructured (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I developed and followed an interview protocol which included questions while conducting interviews. When specific information is needed, a researcher will use questions to guide the interview (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I obtained assistance from educational experts within my school and district to evaluate and offer feedback regarding the quality of the interview questions, aiming to address the research questions effectively. Educational experts included the PBIS coach, my school's PBIS committee members, and the district PBIS Coordinator.

Semistructured interviews allow a researcher and participant to have an open conversation guided by a list of questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Semistructured interviews were conducted to address the purpose of this study. Using semistructured interviews, a researcher can use an interview protocol which includes structured and unstructured questions to gather specific information from all participants (Merriam &

Tisdell, 2016). Participants were given the option of in-person or virtual interviews based on their convenience and allowed them to choose the time and place. Within one week of receiving IRB approval, I began scheduling and conducting interviews, which lasted approximately 30-45 minutes.

Different questions provide different information; a researcher must use good interview questions to answer research questions. Open-ended questions were used to allow participants to share their experiences, thoughts, and perceptions. Follow-up and probing questions were also used to clarify or provide more information if needed. Interview questions consisted of eight questions (five questions for RQ1 and three questions for RQ2) focused on the implementation of PBIS and its effectiveness in managing student behavior. Interview questions were structured to relate directly to the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Interview questions were based on the PBIS framework and a literature review, aligning them with the research questions.

### **Sufficiency of Data Collection**

During a semistructured interview, the researcher and the interviewee participated in a discussion which focused on the research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I conducted semistructured interviews to examine teachers' perceptions of the implementation and effectiveness of PBIS for behavior modification. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), interviews serve as a valuable method for exploring perspectives and gaining access to insights that are not readily observable through other means. Semistructured interviews helped me better understand the participants' experiences, perceptions, and opinions on the research questions. As Creswell (2012a)

noted, semistructured interviews allow the researcher to explore the meaning of the participant's experiences.

### **Data Collection Process**

The data collection process began after receiving emails from each participant acknowledging they consented to participate in the study. Participants could choose between face-to-face interviews and conducting interviews through Google Meet. After participants indicated their preferred interview method, I began working with each participant to schedule an interview at a place and time of their convenience. Then, semistructured one-on-one interviews were conducted according to scheduled times and locations.

Before beginning each interview, participants were reminded of their rights, asked if they had any questions, and informed that I would audio-record, take notes, and transcribe the session to ensure the accuracy of their responses. Each participant completed a one-on-one interview guided by an interview protocol (Appendix B). During this process, participants were asked questions and responses were recorded (Creswell, 2012b). The protocol included open-ended questions that encouraged participants to share their experiences freely. Probes followed each question to prompt elaboration or clarification when needed. Researchers use probes to help clarify responses or encourage participants to expand on their answers (Creswell, 2012b). Following each interview, I documented my thoughts and reflections using Google Docs in a reflexive journal (Barrett et al., 2020).

### **Tracking Data**

When conducting a basic qualitative study using interviews, it is important to adopt a systematic approach to data tracking (Creswell, 2012a). An electronic research log was used to organize and track all data during the data collection process. All recorded interviews were downloaded, along with notes and transcriptions, as electronic files on my password-protected personal computer. All handwritten research data is stored in a locked box at my home for five years, with access restricted solely to me. After five years, the data will be destroyed.

### **Role of Researcher**

My role as a researcher involved conducting semistructured, qualitative interviews as an observer. I am an educator at a school in the same district as the study site. I serve as the leader of my school's PBIS committee and have observed the issues many teachers face with PBIS implementation and its effects on reducing students' disruptive behaviors. Therefore, my preconceived biases could easily influence the data. To avoid any bias I may have, I used the interview protocol to ask questions specific to the study, listened carefully, and avoided imposing my opinions. To minimize potential bias, I maintained a reflexive journal to record my thoughts and reflect on how they could influence the data analysis process. Barrett et al. (2020) stated, reflexive journaling allows researchers to critically examine and manage personal biases or assumptions influencing their interpretation of the data.

## **Data Analysis**

In qualitative research, data analysis and data collection are ongoing (Creswell, 2012a). For this study, I employed a qualitative data analysis approach. Data were gathered through interviews with 11 teachers from the study site, and these interviews were analyzed to identify recurring themes and perceptions. Rubin and Rubin (2012) outline six steps in the data analysis process: transcribing the interviews, coding sections with similar themes, identifying common codes across interviews, sorting and comparing codes, integrating various elements from all interviews to assess the overall findings, and synthesizing themes from the data to explain the results. The analysis focused on teachers' perceptions of implementing the PBIS model for behavior modification and their perceptions of what was needed to improve the program's application.

### **Coding Procedures**

Data analysis began after the first interview was completed. Before analyzing the data, the study's purpose and research questions were reviewed. Data analysis focuses on identifying themes within the data to answer the research questions (Creswell, 2012a). Familiarity with the study's purpose and research questions enabled more efficient and effective coding of the interviews.

As an initial step, Open coding was used to analyze the interviews and identify commonalities relevant to the study. Open coding enabled the collection of helpful data segments (Creswell, 2012a). The coding process began by reading each transcript and highlighting terms and phrases relevant to the study. Then, the data were separated into parts using open coding, and codes were created to identify each part. To identify

similarities and refine the codes using the constant comparative method. From this process, 51 initial codes were identified, including "rewards decrease behavior issues," "ways to manage behaviors," "training needs," and "more behavior support needed." To ensure thoroughness, each transcript was reread to identify anything missed during the first pass. Next, a final reading was conducted, using a color-coding system to highlight similar terms and phrases. The data were then compiled into a master list in Google Sheets, where similar segments were grouped and assigned codes. Upon completing the initial coding, a review of the list was made to ensure there were no duplicate codes and that each code accurately reflected recurring ideas in the data.

**Table 1**

*Open Coding*

Open Code	Number of Times Appeared	Examples
More behavior supports needed	10	supports are not effective for all students and must be individualized (P3)
Give praise to manage behavior	9	praise positive behavior daily and use it as a baseline for expectations (P4)
Teaching expectations	12	practice expectations using expectation stations at the beginning of each semester (P1)
implementation support needed	13	PBIS team should be addressing challenges (P11)

After completing open coding, axial coding was used to construct conceptual categories by grouping similar codes. Axial coding allowed codes to connect and

organize themselves into categories (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). An analysis of patterns across responses was conducted, grouping similar ideas to identify meaningful connections between codes. Through this process, nine categories emerged, including "effective in managing behaviors," "teacher reluctance," "missing support," and "needs". As illustrated in Table 2, these categories linked the initial codes to the broader themes developed in the subsequent analysis phase, thereby organizing the data more effectively for the thematic analysis.

**Table 2**

*Axial Coding*

Axial Code	Open Codes (Words/Phrases)	Examples
Not effective in managing behaviors	-students continue to misbehave -no intrinsic motivation	misbehaviors continue no matter how many points are given (P6)  makes kids want to 'do the right thing' for the moment to earn something (P2)
Current Implementation Practice	-ways to manage behaviors -procedure for giving points	compliment students (P9)  gives students points based on their behaviors (P1)
Needs	-more behavior support needed -more rewards needed	disruptive behaviors require more interventions (P10)  quarterly rewards for no referrals (P11)

To complete the data analysis, thematic analysis, along with open and axial coding, was used to identify patterns and themes. As Merriam and Tisdell (2016)

suggested, thematic analysis involved organizing codes and categories to develop broader themes. Google Sheets were used to sort data and align it with the research questions. Aligning data with research questions made it easier to highlight recurring ideas throughout the transcripts. By synthesizing the codes and categories of information, the main themes were identified that answered the research questions and represented the participants' everyday experiences. Themes 1 and 2 aligned with Research Question 1, which examined what teachers report about the implementation of PBIS in their classrooms. Theme 1 indicated that teachers reported the current implementation of PBIS was not generally effective. Theme 2 indicated that teachers' use of PBIS to manage behaviors was inconsistent. Themes 3 and 4 aligned with Research Question 2, which examined teachers' perceptions of what was needed to make PBIS more effective. Theme 3 revealed that teachers reported the need for individual and school-wide personal and professional support. Theme 4 highlighted that teachers need time and materials to implement PBIS.

**Table 3***Thematic Coding*

Research Question	Theme	Axial Code	Open Codes (Words/Phrases)	Examples
RQ1: What do teachers report about the implementation of PBIS in their classroom?	Theme 1: Teachers reported current implementation of PBIS is not generally effective.	Not effective in managing behaviors	-students continue to misbehave -no intrinsic motivation	misbehaviors continue no matter how many points are given (P6)  makes kids want to 'do the right thing' for the moment to earn something (P2)
RQ2: What are teachers' perspectives about what is needed to make PBIS an effective model for managing student behavior in this school?	Theme 4: Teachers Need Time and Materials to Fully Implement PBIS.	Needs	-more behavior support needed -more rewards needed	disruptive behaviors require more interventions (P10)  quarterly rewards for no referrals (P11)

**Evidence of Quality and Procedures to Assure Accuracy and Credibility**

In qualitative research, ensuring the accuracy and credibility of data is essential to produce reliable results (Creswell, 2012a). Researchers can employ several procedures to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the data. To ensure data accuracy, I audio-recorded and transcribed each interview verbatim myself. Audio recordings encourage a safe and

friendly setting, keeping the dialogue between participant and researcher interactive and increasing transparency. I utilized the interview protocol to ensure consistency across each interview, asking the same questions to all participants.

To ensure the credibility of the data, I used member checking. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), member checking helps confirm collected data accurately reflect participants' perceptions and experiences while reducing the potential for researcher bias or misinterpretation. I emailed participants a summary of their interview responses and asked them to review and verify whether my interpretations aligned with their intended meaning. None of the participants requested changes. Additionally, I maintained a reflexive journal throughout the study to minimize bias.

### **Procedures for Dealing with Discrepant Cases**

Procedures for dealing with discrepant data include reporting inconsistencies or discrepancies to reduce bias (Creswell, 2012a). Additionally, identifying discrepant cases could assist the school in improving the implementation and application of the PBIS program. After completing the data analysis, no discrepant cases were identified, suggesting consistency in participant responses and alignment with the PBIS framework.

### **Data Analysis Findings**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the PBIS model for behavior modification and their perceptions of what was needed to improve the application of this program. The data were collected and analyzed to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What do teachers report about the implementation of PBIS in their classrooms?

RQ2: What are teachers' perceptions about what is needed to make PBIS an effective model for managing student behavior in this school?

Nine categories emerged from the interviews, and I developed four themes from these categories: teachers reported the current implementation of PBIS is not generally effective, teachers' use of PBIS to manage behaviors was inconsistent, teachers reported the need for individual and school-wide personal and professional support, and teachers need time and materials to implement PBIS fully.

### **Themes Aligned with RQ1**

The first RQ was used to explore teachers' experiences with implementing PBIS in their classrooms. RQ1 corresponded with themes one and two. After analyzing 11 interview transcripts, it became clear that implementing PBIS was generally ineffective in managing student behavior, and teachers' application of PBIS for behavior management was inconsistent.

#### ***Theme 1***

During interviews, teachers shared varying opinions about the effectiveness of PBIS, with several expressing concerns about its implementation. After examining 11 interview transcripts, a common theme emerged: teachers reported the current implementation of PBIS was not generally effective. This theme encompasses 19 codes and three categories: effective in managing behaviors, ineffective in managing behaviors, and student dissatisfaction.

Four participants (P3, P4, P7, P11) reported PBIS effectively managed behaviors. Specifically, two participants (P3, P7) noted reductions in office referrals and classroom disruptions. For example, P3 mentioned office referrals decreased as students responded positively to the support provided. At the same time, P7 reported PBIS “helped with students blurting out less”, indicating a decrease in classroom disruptions following the implementation of PBIS. Furthermore, over half of the participants (N = 6) indicated reinforcements motivated students to align their behavior with classroom expectations. Five out of eleven participants emphasized using positive reinforcements, such as rewards, to inspire behavior changes and diminish disruptions effectively. For instance, P10 noted offering rewards decreased behavior problems and encouraged students to act appropriately. However, seven participants (P1, P2, P5, P6, P8, P9, P10) expressed concerns about the effectiveness of PBIS in managing behaviors, especially with students exhibiting persistent behavior issues. P5 and P6 noted reinforcements did not consistently affect misbehaving students, while P10 enforced this by stating reinforcements are very ineffective, especially for students who exhibit continuous disruptive behaviors. P2 observed that although PBIS led to some improvement in behavior, it failed to address the underlying causes. When asked if the PBIS framework affected how they manage their classrooms, only four out of eleven participants indicated PBIS affected their classroom management. Implementing the PBIS framework in their classrooms has helped reinforce positive behaviors and allows students ownership in their behavior, noted P4. P3 added using the PBIS framework in their classroom has helped them be

more mindful of recognizing students for behaving appropriately, instead of focusing on students who demonstrate disruptive behaviors.

Additionally, teachers were concerned the effects of PBIS were temporary, as students continued to require rewards for consistent behavior. Participants stated removing rewards can cause behavior improvements to decline. For example, Participant P2 mentioned, "changes in behavior didn't last long, only until they [students] got a reward". P1 and P10 noted PBIS worked primarily for students who were already well-behaved, revealing challenges in maintaining cooperation among students with ongoing behavioral issues.

Participants (N = 8) also reported student dissatisfaction with PBIS, citing a lack of interest in incentives. Participant 4 mentioned challenges in finding items students wanted to spend their points on, raising questions about the long-term impact of PBIS on behavior change. Most participants (81%, N = 9) emphasized students' lack of interest in PBIS rewards. However, one participant (P1) noted PBIS successfully motivated students who responded positively to the incentives. Despite this, three participants (P2, P3, P10) reported the reliance on rewards posed challenges for achieving sustained behavior change, as students often exhibited temporary improvements, which diminished once the rewards were removed. The statements shared by participants confirm that, while PBIS has some success in managing student behavior, it also has limitations in creating long-term behavioral changes. Baule (2020) and Yeung et al. (2016) emphasized, while PBIS effectively improves student behavior, challenges persist in sustaining its long-term effects. Teachers reported mixed experiences, with a small portion, three out of 11,

finding it effective in reducing disruptions and office referrals through positive reinforcement. However, 72% (N=8) expressed concerns that the effect of PBIS on student behavior was temporary, and students often returned to prior behaviors once rewards were removed. The findings also indicate PBIS motivates students extrinsically, causing them to expect rewards for meeting basic expectations rather than internalizing positive behavior. Additionally, teachers reported a lack of student engagement with the rewards system, as some students showed minimal interest in the incentives offered, making it challenging to sustain behavior changes.

### *Theme 2*

The PBIS framework encourages positive student behaviors, supports equitable and inclusive learning environments, and effectively addresses challenging behaviors. However, its effectiveness depends on consistent implementation across classrooms. Participants in this study frequently utilized tools such as behavior matrices, positive reinforcements, teaching expectations, and behavioral conferences to manage student behavior. Despite the widespread use of these strategies, their implementation varied significantly, potentially undermining their overall effectiveness.

The behavior matrix, a behavior management tool in the PBIS framework, outlines behavioral expectations to foster clarity and consistency in managing student behaviors. Among the 11 participants, three (P1, P5, P10) identified the behavior matrix as essential in their classrooms, emphasizing its value in providing step-by-step strategies for responding to student behaviors. P2 highlighted its role in promoting consistency, while P6 noted its effectiveness in fostering fairness and equality. However, the

inconsistent availability of behavior matrices presented a challenge. For instance, Participant 5 expressed frustration at knowing the matrix existed but never having access to it. “We were told there was a behavior matrix outlining the expectations for all areas of the school- we never saw it” (P5). The behavior matrix is designed to promote consistent and equitable behavior management, although implementation and access varied among participants.

Positive reinforcement strategies, including rewards and praise, were identified as the most used methods for managing student behavior. All participants integrated these reinforcements into their classroom management practices. These approaches were reported to motivate students and encourage behavioral improvements. Specifically, nine out of eleven participants reported recognizing students for meeting expectations through positive reinforcement decreased undesirable behaviors while promoting appropriate ones. Additionally, P2 emphasized the importance of implementing positive reinforcement early in the school year, highlighting its role in establishing and reinforcing positive behavior patterns.

Participants frequently implemented rewards as positive reinforcement among participants, with 71% (N=8) consistently reporting using rewards to recognize students for exhibiting appropriate behaviors. For example, P11 emphasized the effectiveness of rewards in acknowledging positive behavior without additional prompting. However, two participants (P1, P3) provided rewards contingently, using them to enforce rules. P1 described this approach as "holding rewards over students' heads" to influence appropriate behavior. Despite its widespread use, only six participants out of 11 reported

consistently implementing rewards. P2 noted improvements in behavior often lasted only until a student received a reward, suggesting a potential short-term impact. Participant 3 further warned against over-reliance on rewards, suggesting a balance between rewards and consequences. Praise, a specific form of positive reinforcement, was also commonly used, with six participants implementing it into their strategies. Three participants (P1, P7, P9) preferred public praise to acknowledge positive behaviors, with P9 noting it helps reinforce appropriate behaviors when done in front of peers. However, two participants (P4, P10) preferred private praise, stressing the importance of addressing individual students' social-emotional needs. This data highlights the effectiveness of positive reinforcement while identifying areas where more consistency could positively affect long-term behavior changes in students.

Teaching behavior expectations and conducting behavior conferences were strategies reported by participants to manage student behaviors, although both approaches lacked consistency. Nine out of eleven participants reported teaching expectations, with seven emphasizing the importance of starting at the beginning of the school year. P9 described a structured method, using the first week of school and the initial days after breaks to teach and review behavior expectations, stating, "I always use the first week of school and the few days after a break to reteach expectations because it sets the tone for the next phase". Similarly, four participants (P1, P4, P8, P11) stressed that ongoing reinforcement throughout the year is essential. P4 explained, "Teaching expectations is not just a one-time thing at the beginning of the year; it's about reminding students

consistently throughout the year," emphasizing a yearlong commitment to consistently teaching and reinforcing expectations.

Behavioral conferences were another widely used strategy, with eight out of 11 participants implementing them to address inappropriate behaviors. These conferences allowed teachers to identify the root causes of negative behaviors and engage students in meaningful conversations to uncover underlying issues. P4 shared, "Conferences help us understand what's happening with a student so we can address it better". P10 also noted starting a conference with something positive about the student creates a supportive environment for discussing behavior. Similarly, P8 emphasized conferences "allow students to reflect on their choices and understand the consequences of their actions". Participants expressed concerns about inconsistent follow-through after the conferences despite their potential benefits. P1 explained, "Students often revert to old behaviors without consistent follow-up". P8 described a lack of conference follow-up as using "a Band-Aid that doesn't stick". P11 added without follow-up, improvements in behavior are typically short-lived and are a recurring problem, highlighting while behavioral conferences can effectively address student challenges, their success depends on consistent reinforcement and follow-up to ensure long-term behavioral change.

Participants expressed reluctance to implement PBIS practices to manage student behavior, which is a barrier to consistent implementation. This reported reluctance derived from two key factors: a lack of teacher buy-in and knowledge. P7 highlighted some teachers needed to implement the framework fully, noting they failed to use positive reinforcement to support student behavior. Similarly, P9 emphasized the lack of

teacher buy-in, suggesting PBIS can only effectively manage behaviors with full participation. In addition to limited buy-in, a lack of teacher knowledge, particularly among new or less experienced teachers, was also a concern. P1 explained one challenge of implementation was new teachers had little to no understanding of the framework. P10 reinforced this concern, noting implementation becomes difficult when teachers lack familiarity with its practices.

### **Themes Aligned with RQ2**

The second RQ was used to examine teachers' perceptions of what is necessary for PBIS to be an effective model for managing student behavior. RQ2 was addressed and aligned with themes three and four. After analyzing interview transcripts, it became evident that teachers required individual and school-wide support and resources to implement PBIS.

#### ***Theme 3***

During interviews, participants shared varying opinions about what was needed to make PBIS an effective model for managing student behavior. After examining 11 interview transcripts, a common theme emerged: participants reported needing personal and professional support, both individual and school wide. This theme encompasses eight codes and two categories: *support needed and missing support*.

Four out of 11 participants (P4, P7, P8, P9) highlighted the need for individualized support to address challenges in implementing PBIS effectively. P4 and P9 described having difficulty implementing PBIS because they did not know the process. Meanwhile, P7 expressed uncertainty about whether their strategies aligned with PBIS

and needed additional support to ensure their practices met expectations. Furthermore, P8 and P9 mentioned challenges associated with teaching behavioral expectations, highlighting the difficulty of implementing PBIS. Additionally, four participants (P1, P6, P10, P11) emphasized the need for mentorship as a form of individualized support. P1 suggested experienced teachers should be mentors, assisting those less familiar with PBIS implementation. Similarly, P6 stressed the need for support from knowledgeable individuals, stating, “I would like to see someone who knows how to implement PBIS correctly come into my classroom and apply it”. P10 emphasized the need for continued support, noting some time had passed since their initial encounter with PBIS implementation, making it challenging to recall the initial steps.

In addition to individualized support, nine participants (P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P9, P10, and P11) emphasized the need for school-wide support to ensure consistent PBIS implementation. P6, P9, and P11 stated school-wide support was necessary to foster classroom consistency. P11 emphasized the PBIS team should assist teachers with implementation challenges, stating continuous support can help address common issues teachers face. P9 specifically highlighted the need for regular refresher training, suggesting having training at the start of the year and mid-semester would reinforce PBIS expectations and reduce inconsistencies in implementation. P2 emphasized the importance of clear communication, noting inconsistent communication among teachers leads to confusion and hinders the success of PBIS. Participants identified areas needing support and areas where support was completely missing. Participants overwhelmingly highlighted two significant concerns: missing administrative and parental support.

Specifically, eight out of 11 participants mentioned missing administrative support as a challenge to effective implementation. P3 voiced frustration regarding administrative support, stating, "Managing negative behaviors is challenging without consistent admin support". Similarly, P8 pointed out inaccessibility issues, noting instances where administrative support was unavailable to address behavioral challenges. This was often due to administrators being occupied with other matters or not answering calls. P5 explained inconsistent communication from administrators about behavior policies created uncertainty among staff, making rule enforcement challenging, stating, "It feels like the rules change daily, which makes enforcing them difficult". Participants agreed consistent administrative support is needed to ensure effective implementation.

P2 highlighted the challenges this issue poses for participants, stating, "If we had more parental involvement from students who frequently exhibit disruptive behaviors, our lives would be easier". They proposed improving parental support could improve student behavior, adding, "If their parents' lives were inconvenienced more, I believe we would observe a change in behaviors". Similarly, P8 observed "the parent aspect of PBIS has not been effective because parents are not as involved as they should be". P9 noted while some parents are engaged, many remain unaware of PBIS, further affecting its implementation. Additionally, P5 and P6 shared their frustrations with the inconsistency of parental engagement, particularly regarding students with ongoing behavioral challenges.

#### *Theme 4*

One of the stated aims of PBIS is to promote positive student behaviors, foster equitable learning environments, and effectively address challenging behaviors. However, participants in this study frequently identified a lack of time and materials as significant barriers to the successful implementation of PBIS. Time constraints hindered their consistent rewarding of positive behaviors and the effective implementation of PBIS strategies.

Four participants (P3, P4, P8, and P10) explicitly noted challenges in finding time to reward students. For instance, P4 shared, "Having enough time to give students points has been challenging for me". Similarly, P3 discussed how a lack of time hindered their ability to reward students effectively and address behavioral challenges. P8 highlighted the difficulty of implementing PBIS into their classroom routine, stating, "It is difficult some days to have the time to implement PBIS when we get busy with all the other things we have to do". P10 expressed broader concerns, noting a lack of time for rewarding students, reviewing behavioral data, and implementing PBIS strategies with instructional responsibilities. In addition to challenges with rewarding students, four participants (P5, P6, P8, and P10) emphasized a lack of time to implement PBIS strategies effectively. P6 noted, "Teachers do not have enough time to implement PBIS for it to be effective," emphasizing the importance of time in maintaining the effectiveness of PBIS. P10 reinforced this statement, highlighting the challenge of balancing the time required to implement PBIS with their teaching responsibilities. Similarly, P8 emphasized the

difficulty of juggling multiple priorities, identifying a lack of time as a key factor hindering the effective implementation of PBIS.

Six out of 11 participants stressed the importance of materials as a crucial component for successfully implementing PBIS, repeatedly underscoring the necessity for behavioral support, reinforcement, intervention, and collaborative resources. P6 remarked, “Without the right materials, it feels like we’re just piecing things together,” highlighting the challenges of addressing behavioral issues without sufficient resources. P3 echoed this concern, saying, “We need more tangible items to reward students effectively; what we have now doesn’t motivate them”. Similarly, P11 indicated the need for customized materials, stating, “The current system doesn’t work for all students; we need options catering to those who don’t respond to typical supports”. This shortage highlights teachers' challenges in effectively integrating PBIS into their daily routines.

Over half of the participants (N = 6) expressed a clear need for materials to support interventions for students with disruptive behaviors. P1 emphasized the current supports are insufficient to meet all students’ needs, especially those who require tailored materials to address specific behavioral challenges. Similarly, P3 highlighted the necessity for adequate reward options and called for alternative supports for students with more significant behavioral needs, stating specialized resources are crucial for effectively assisting "troubled" students.

In addition to intervention materials, four participants (P6, P8, P9, and P11) identified the need for resources to sustain reward systems as a significant challenge to implementing PBIS effectively, citing its impact on student motivation and engagement.

P11 stressed the importance of consistent rewards, suggesting quarterly incentives to reinforce positive behaviors regularly. Other participants elaborated on these challenges, with P8 describing the reward system as "time-consuming and difficult to manage consistently" due to limited resources and time constraints. P6 proposed that providing a broader range of reward materials might boost student interest and participation, pointing out that the existing options do not engage every student, especially those not motivated by conventional incentives. P9 further emphasized how the inconsistent availability of reward resources undermines the system's reliability and fairness, often leading to student disengagement.

### **Summary**

Findings from this study indicate that the successful implementation of PBIS at the study school depends on strengthening professional development, enhancing administrative and peer support, standardizing PBIS tools and practices, and allocating adequate resources. Based on the findings from the analysis, I chose a white paper (Appendix A) as the most suitable format for presenting the findings and resulting recommendations because it provides a structured and accessible method for communicating qualitative research outcomes to stakeholders, such as school leaders and PBIS teams. This project genre was selected for its effectiveness in translating qualitative findings into actionable information for educational decision-makers, a crucial consideration given the implementation challenges described in Section 2. The format aligns well with the context-specific nature of the data collected and analyzed, allowing

practitioner experiences to inform structured, evidence-based recommendations for school leadership.

Interviews with 11 experienced teachers implementing PBIS at a southeastern primary school revealed four key themes. Teachers viewed the current PBIS implementation as ineffective and reported inconsistent strategy use. Additionally, they expressed that personalized support was needed at individual and schoolwide levels, and available resources were insufficient for full implementation.

These findings are addressed in the white paper through recommendations focusing on strengthening professional development and teacher training, enhancing administrative and peer support, standardizing PBIS tools and practices, and ensuring adequate resource allocation. These recommendations are based on teacher feedback and grounded in relevant literature, providing school leaders with practical guidance. When training, mentorship, leadership support, and materials are aligned with identified needs, implementation of PBIS is more likely to occur with consistency and fidelity. The white paper format supports the project's goal of transforming classroom-based insights into actionable guidance for school improvement.

### Section 3: The Project

In this study, I examined teachers' perceptions of implementing the PBIS model for behavior modification and their perceptions on what was needed to enhance its effectiveness. Through interviews, participants shared their experiences and identified key areas needing improvement. The findings revealed a need for targeted interventions to enhance consistency, provide adequate support, and ensure sufficient resources for implementing PBIS successfully.

In response to these findings, I created a white paper (Appendix A) outlining four recommendations to address these challenges. The recommendations focus on strengthening professional development, enhancing support systems, standardizing tools and practices, and allocating necessary resources to improve the implementation and outcomes of PBIS. The findings and literature review provided the basis for these recommendations for improvement.

#### **Rationale**

I chose a white paper (Appendix A) as the most suitable format for presenting the study findings because it provides a structured and accessible method for communicating qualitative research outcomes to stakeholders, such as school leaders and PBIS teams. This format was particularly well-suited to the qualitative and context-specific data collected and analyzed in Section 2, as it enables the translation of practitioner narratives into structured, evidence-based recommendations for school leadership. Through interviews with 11 experienced teachers implementing PBIS at a southeastern primary school, four central themes emerged: teachers reported the current implementation of

PBIS is not generally effective, that their use of PBIS to manage behaviors was inconsistent, that there is a need for both individual and school-wide personal and professional support, and that teachers require time and materials to implement PBIS fully. The content of the white paper addressed the four key problems identified in the study by focusing on strengthening professional development and teacher training, enhancing administrative and peer support systems, standardizing PBIS tools and implementation practices, and allocating adequate resources. These recommendations are rooted in teacher feedback and supported by existing literature, offering school leaders a clear and practical guide. When training, mentorship, leadership support, and materials are aligned with what teachers need, PBIS becomes more manageable and more likely to be implemented with fidelity across the school environment. The white paper format aligned with the project's goal of turning classroom-based feedback into actionable guidance for school improvement.

### **Review of Literature**

I conducted a literature review by searching for scholarly and peer-reviewed articles. I conducted keyword searches to gather relevant literature using databases such as Academic Search Complete, APA PsycArticles, Education Source, ERIC, Google Scholar, SAGE Journals, and Teacher Reference Center. Search terms were *position paper*, *white paper*, *PBIS implementation challenges*, *resources for PBIS implementation*, *PBIS professional training*, *barriers to PBIS implementation*, and *impact of support on PBIS implementation*.

## **White Paper**

White papers are strategic tools for addressing educational challenges, blending research and practice to develop practical, evidence-based recommendations. Unlike academic reports, white papers present information in a structured, persuasive, and data-driven manner, identify key problems and provide actionable solutions (Stelzner, 2007). Pershing (2015) described white papers as persuasive essays using research to propose solutions to problems. In the context of PBIS, a white paper serves as a valuable tool for researchers and teachers to present findings, examine implementation challenges, and provide strategic recommendations for improving PBIS outcomes. This format educates school leaders about current issues and offers clear, research-based solutions to improve implementation.

One significant advantage of the white paper format is its ability to present research-based solutions to common PBIS challenges in a structured and practical manner. Bruhn et al. (2020) highlighted common criticisms of PBIS, particularly its perceived ineffectiveness in changing long-term student behavior and its excessive reliance on extrinsic motivators. The researchers' study presented a framework for addressing these critiques, emphasizing the necessity of including professional development and coaching to ensure consistent and high-fidelity application of behavior reinforcement strategies during successful PBIS implementation. These findings aligned with Bornstein (2015), who criticized PBIS for medicalizing compliance and warned if not implemented correctly, PBIS may prioritize discipline over genuine behavioral growth. Another key factor in PBIS implementation is teacher concerns and readiness,

which directly impact the fidelity and sustainability of the program. Tyre et al. (2020) examined teachers' concerns regarding PBIS and found many teachers struggled with the consistency of implementation due to unclear expectations, lack of administrative support, and insufficient professional development. The study, based on teacher surveys and focus groups, revealed teachers generally supported the principles of PBIS; however, many felt unprepared to implement the practices effectively in classroom settings. Findings from Tyre et al.'s study aligned with Bruhn et al. (2020), who highlighted the importance of professional development and ongoing coaching as critical components for the effective implementation of PBIS. Using a white paper format, researchers can highlight these teacher concerns and propose targeted solutions, such as more structured professional development programs and more precise communication between teachers and administrators.

The white paper format allows for comprehensive data analysis, which is essential for enhancing PBIS implementation. Bornstein (2015) argued PBIS neglected the underlying causes of student behavior, emphasizing superficial compliance over substantial behavioral change. This oversight may lead to reactive rather than proactive discipline strategies, which fail to encourage long-term student development. Tyre et al. (2020) observed many teachers lack adequate training to tailor PBIS strategies for different student groups, resulting in inconsistent implementation and diminished effectiveness. Using a white paper approach, researchers can systematically present data highlighting these challenges, followed by recommendations to improve PBIS implementation. In addition to being data-driven, the white paper is a valuable tool for

professional development. Bruhn et al. (2020) emphasized the significance of continuous professional development and coaching in PBIS, noting how ongoing training helps teachers refine their reinforcement strategies and effectively address common implementation challenges. Similarly, Tyre et al. (2020) argued inadequate training and follow-up support represented significant barriers to successful PBIS implementation. A white paper integrates research with practice by applying research-based recommendations to implement effective school strategies.

Additionally, white papers serve as a key resource for addressing PBIS misconceptions. Bruhn et al. (2020) argued many teachers misinterpret PBIS, thinking it relies too much on extrinsic rewards. However, the research suggested these concerns could be addressed through strategic implementation adjustments, such as gradually reducing extrinsic reinforcements and increasing intrinsic reinforcements. Tyre et al. (2020) further highlighted the importance of teacher buy-in for PBIS success, as many teachers felt PBIS did not offer enough flexibility to differentiate strategies for individual students' needs. Organizing this information in a white paper allows teachers to respond effectively to PBIS criticisms, clarify misunderstandings, and refine implementation strategies to foster long-term behavioral improvement outcomes.

The white paper format is ideal for this project because of its structured, data-driven approach. It allows for a clear presentation of research findings and an in-depth analysis of PBIS implementation challenges. It enables the development of practical, evidence-based recommendations to address key concerns in PBIS implementation.

Additionally, this format ensures school leaders and teachers receive actionable strategies to improve PBIS implementation.

### **Professional Development**

The success of PBIS is based on the quality and consistency of professional development (PD) offered to teachers. While PBIS frameworks are designed to improve student behavior, their long-term effect depends mainly on teachers' ability to implement them with fidelity (Freeman et al., 2020). Teachers need more than an initial introduction; they need time and support to implement PBIS strategies into their daily routines. Sustained, high-quality PD is essential for maintaining implementation fidelity and enhancing PBIS's effect on student behavior.

Differentiated, ongoing PD is more effective than standard models because it aligns support with teachers' needs. In a meta-analysis of 28 studies, Bloomfield et al. (2024) found tiered PD models tailored to teachers' experience levels resulted in more significant implementation outcomes compared to standardized training formats. Teachers receiving personalized support were more engaged in PBIS-related decision-making and adhered closely to its core principles. Similarly, in a study conducted by Owens et al. (2023), teachers participating in self-assessment and receiving individualized PD applied reinforcement strategies more consistently and showed more buy-in. The findings from both studies indicated one-size-fits-all PD models are inadequate, emphasizing the necessity of differentiated, ongoing support for effective PBIS implementation.

Coaching is consistently identified as one of the most effective PD strategies for improving PBIS. Massar et al. (2022) studied 44 elementary teachers in a controlled setting and found those who received weekly performance feedback significantly enhanced their use of behavior-specific praise and routines. The study's approach used fidelity tools and observation to define coaching as improving implementation accuracy through specific feedback. The coaching model, used by Massar et al. (2022), emphasized accountability but assumed behavioral challenges were best addressed through correction.

Benedetti (2024) took a broader approach by working with 200 teachers and 20 PBIS coordinators across 10 schools, embedding coaching and peer mentoring into professional development systems. Findings indicated that implementation fidelity improved not only through instructional support but also through shared responsibility among staff. Stoiber et al. (2022) examined 23 early childhood teachers who participated in yearlong, consultative coaching, which included personalized goal setting, live modeling, and embedded feedback. Results showed stronger retention of PBIS strategies and more consistent behavior management practices, particularly among less experienced teachers. Shinn et al. (2024) implemented a scalable, group-based TCIT-GC model across 11 districts. Within eight weeks, 41 early elementary teachers reported improved classroom management, enhanced teacher–student relationships, and fewer behavioral disruptions. The studies demonstrated that a single format did not define effective coaching. Coaching proved most beneficial when it remained consistent, embedded within school systems, and adaptable to specific instructional contexts.

## **Standardized Tools and Practices**

The consistent use of standardized PBIS tools has been repeatedly linked to improved student behavior and more substantial implementation outcomes. Gage et al. (2020) conducted a large-scale study of over 1,000 schools using fidelity rubrics and school-level discipline data. Schools using reinforcement systems consistently experienced a 30% reduction in suspension rates, highlighting the measurable impact of structured tools on behavioral outcomes. In a longitudinal study, Elrod et al. (2022) examined fidelity and discipline trends across multiple secondary schools. The study found strong PBIS fidelity correlated with improved student behavior and more favorable school climate outcomes. Both studies used validated fidelity tools and longitudinal tracking methods, demonstrating improved outcomes when teachers consistently applied standardized supports. The studies provide a strong foundation for understanding how tool consistency supports the PBIS framework.

Additional studies reinforced these findings and revealed how specific tools consistently contribute to behavioral improvements. Elrod et al. (2022) conducted a fidelity evaluation in 36 schools, finding the consistent use of materials like reinforcement systems and scripted lesson plans resulted in a measurable decline in office discipline referrals. Similarly, Scherer and Ingle (2020), in their study of 17 urban schools, observed how visual behavior matrices and posted expectations helped create consistency in teacher responses and student behavior. Both studies utilized fidelity checklists and school-level discipline tracking, providing practical insights into how tool usage can promote classroom clarity and reduce variability. Findings from both studies

affirmed structured behavioral systems are most helpful and impactful when incorporated into daily routines.

While standardized PBIS tools are necessary for implementation fidelity, research suggested consistent use relies on teacher support and reflective practice. Beahm et al. (2023) examined PBIS implementation in elementary schools, using coaching and teacher feedback to assess how reinforcement tools and behavioral expectations were applied. The findings revealed consistency proved most effective when teachers engaged in structured reflection and incorporated reinforcement into daily routines. Similarly, Owens et al. (2023) investigated teachers' self-assessments and found reflective goal setting correlated positively with the consistent use of PBIS strategies, particularly in delivering praise and reinforcement. This indicated teachers needed to utilize standardized tools for successful implementation and receive support from systems promoting teacher reflection and instructional alignment.

### **Enhancing Support Systems**

Teachers maintained PBIS fidelity by consistently implementing classroom strategies (Sugai & Horner, 2020). Researchers emphasized the importance of organizational support, collaboration, and administrative reinforcement in helping PBIS remain a cohesive initiative. Instead, emphasis was placed on how these elements enabled PBIS to function as a coherent, school-wide framework (Petrasek et al., 2022). Studies examining classroom implementation demonstrated how teacher support structures, such as coaching, collaboration, and school-wide alignment, enhanced the effectiveness and sustainability of PBIS.

These support structures are critical in helping teachers implement PBIS strategies consistently and with fidelity. Schools that sustain PBIS over time do more than communicate expectations; they invest in the systems and assist teachers in applying those expectations effectively. Benedetti (2024) found that educators who participated in ongoing professional development demonstrated significantly higher PBIS fidelity compared to those attending one-time training sessions. Based on multi-year school data, Petrusek et al. (2022) found that structured leadership support, like regular staff meetings focused on PBIS and data-driven decision-making, improved schools, and reduced office discipline referrals. Tyre and Feuerborn (2021) emphasized educators often perceived fidelity not as an individual responsibility but because of the consistent support received within a functioning school system. These findings highlighted how effective implementation involved more than teacher compliance; it showed that coordinated systems enabled teachers to apply PBIS practices confidently and clearly.

Coaching is one of the most tangible forms of teacher support, but its success depends on how it is structured and prioritized by the school. In a systematic review of 50 studies, Bloomfield et al. (2024) found coaching most effective when delivered through multi-tiered systems providing teachers with regular, context-specific feedback. Their analysis emphasized peer coaching, where experienced PBIS implementers mentor newer teachers, was especially helpful in promoting long-term consistency. Massar et al. (2022) found coaching efforts often lost momentum when teachers lacked planning time, administrative support, or opportunities for reflection. In a randomized controlled trial, Simonsen et al. (2022) discovered coaching had the most substantial effects when

embedded in classroom routines, such as co-planning and modeling, rather than when delivered as a one-time professional development. Tyre and Feuerborn (2021) also identified coaching as one of the most frequently overlooked supports in low-fidelity schools, often due to poor implementation planning. Additionally, Bethune (2017) added coaching increased the frequency and improved the accuracy of strategies used when incorporating modeling and feedback. Findings from the studies suggest coaching supports teachers when embedded within an infrastructure valuing ongoing, job-embedded support.

Leadership is critical in ensuring teachers receive the support needed to implement PBIS strategies consistently. In a longitudinal study examining behavioral outcomes across multiple campuses, Petrusek et al. (2022) discovered schools with active administrative involvement experienced more substantial implementation outcomes, including reduced disciplinary incidents. According to the research, teachers were more likely to align with the school-wide framework when administrators reinforced PBIS expectations through staff development, monitoring, and engagement with behavioral data. Benedetti (2024) also reported teachers felt greater efficacy and confidence when administrators were visibly involved in PBIS initiatives. Utilizing large-scale implementation data, McIntosh et al. (2020) found schools demonstrating higher PBIS fidelity often benefited from strong administrative leadership, including consistent communication of expectations and goals. This administrative support was associated with more consistent implementation across classrooms. According to Tyre et al. (2020), teachers were more inclined to view PBIS as fragmented or optional without

administrative support. Macy and Wheeler (2020) further emphasized that the consistency and quality of leadership engagement directly influenced teacher buy-in. These studies highlight that leadership shapes the environment in which teachers operate, either enabling consistent PBIS use or undermining it through passive or inconsistent support.

Collaboration among educators reinforces fidelity by allowing teachers to refine practices, troubleshoot challenges, and share solutions. In a large-scale survey of over 800 educators, Petrusek et al. (2022) reported schools integrating PBIS into professional learning communities (PLCs) reported higher implementation consistency and greater teacher confidence. These collaborative spaces offered teachers peer reinforcement, real-time feedback, and opportunities to adjust their strategies based on student needs. Tyre and Feuerborn (2021) also identified collaboration as essential but often overlooked support, particularly in schools where PBIS was treated as a stand-alone training rather than an evolving process. Wills et al. (2021) mentioned structured collaboration improved implementation fidelity and enhanced classroom climate, suggesting collaborative teacher support has ripple effects on student outcomes. Benedetti (2024) confirmed structured peer discussions helped teachers manage the emotional and practical demands of implementing behavior strategies, especially in high-need schools. These findings demonstrate collaboration is not optional; it is essential for creating consistency and reinforcement teachers need to apply PBIS strategies long-term.

When teacher support systems, such as coaching, leadership, and collaboration, are intentionally aligned, PBIS is more than a classroom-level initiative. PBIS becomes a

coordinated schoolwide effort in which educators are equipped, encouraged, and supported to implement behavioral strategies with fidelity. Flores (2023) found that even highly motivated teachers required consistent, school-based support to apply PBIS practices effectively over time, demonstrating that personal commitment alone was not sufficient. This finding aligns with broader literature emphasizing the importance of sustained infrastructure and shared responsibility in promoting strong implementation and long-term success.

### **Resources**

Successful implementation of PBIS requires more than just professional development or top-down guidance. It depends on whether teachers have the tools to translate schoolwide behavioral expectations into daily practice. Teachers need consistent access to resources like reinforcement systems, visual behavior cues, and digital platforms to implement PBIS strategies with fidelity. In a mixed-methods study, Petrusek et al. (2022) found teachers working in schools with organized access to token economies and behavior-tracking tools implemented reinforcement strategies more consistently and with greater confidence. Likewise, Robertson et al. (2020), in a statewide survey, found a lack of access to behavior monitoring tools limited teachers' ability to track student progress or apply data-informed interventions. While Petrusek et al. emphasized how resources shaped daily practice, Robertson et al. showed how the absence of tools left teachers unable to monitor or adjust behavior plans effectively. Together, these findings highlight that teachers cannot sustain PBIS practices without the structured materials to help them respond consistently and proactively to student behavior.

The presence of materials supports teacher consistency and shapes how educators perceive PBIS. In a qualitative study, Tyre et al. (2020) found teachers who lacked access to basic materials, like reinforcement visuals or structured behavior plans, expressed frustration and described PBIS as fragmented. In the absence of school-provided tools, many reported having to design their systems, which led to inconsistency across classrooms. Bloomfield et al. (2024) reached similar conclusions in a systematic review of 50 PBIS implementation studies, finding schools with strong leadership and training still reported low fidelity when material support was lacking. While Tyre et al. amplified the teacher's perspective, Bloomfield et al. demonstrated that it was a widespread implementation issue, not an isolated concern. Both studies reinforce that leadership alone does not ensure fidelity; teachers need access to tools to bring vision to life.

Digital tools provide a practical solution for schools seeking to establish consistent classroom behavior systems. In an experimental study, Simonsen et al. (2022) found that teachers who used real-time behavior dashboards and received coaching responded more consistently to student behavior than those in control groups. Their use of digital tools was directly linked to improvements in classroom management and PBIS fidelity. Complementing these findings, Gage et al. (2020) analyzed data from over 1,000 schools. The research suggested that structured implementation tools, including behavior monitoring systems and reinforcement protocols, were associated with reduced suspension rates and improved behavioral outcomes. While Simonsen et al. (2022) focused on combining coaching with digital tools, Gage et al. (2020) highlighted the outcome benefits of consistent tool use at scale. Together, these studies emphasize that

when teachers have access to user-friendly digital supports, their ability to implement PBIS consistently and responsively improves significantly.

However, the benefits of digital tools can only be realized when schools ensure all teachers have access. In a large-scale implementation study, McIntosh et al. (2020) found high-fidelity PBIS schools consistently used structured digital tools and reinforcement systems in their daily routines. These systems helped align classroom behavioral expectations and made staff responses more predictable. In contrast, despite well-trained teachers, schools exhibited inconsistent implementation across grades due to limited resource access. Similarly, Macy and Wheeler (2020) found teachers in under-resourced schools were less likely to view PBIS as equitable or sustainable, primarily because they lacked the tools to apply expectations consistently. McIntosh et al. provide outcome-based data, while Macy and Wheeler centered on teacher perception. However, both emphasize that PBIS cannot operate as a schoolwide framework without resource equity; it turns into a classroom-by-classroom effort.

Leadership support, while necessary, is insufficient without the infrastructure that allows teachers to follow through. Flores (2023) examined PBIS implementation in elementary schools and found teachers who received regular feedback and administrative support still struggled to maintain fidelity when reinforcement materials, student behavior data, or printed visuals were missing. The gap between theoretical and practical support was most evident in schools serving high-poverty populations, where access to materials was limited. Bloomfield et al. (2024) also emphasized the lack of resources consistently predicted lower fidelity, even with strong leadership teams. These results indicate that

supportive leadership alone cannot fill structural gaps. Teachers need access to the materials to make expectations actionable in real classrooms.

While much of the research underscores the value of resources, several studies caution that tools alone are insufficient. Gagnon et al. (2020) noted that teachers often felt unsure about interpreting behavioral data in schools where digital tools were introduced without sufficient training and support. This research aligns with Simonsen et al. (2022), who found that even with advanced data systems, outcomes were limited when teachers lacked scheduled time to analyze and act on the information. These study results highlight the importance of providing tools and ensuring their integration into teacher workflows, supported through professional learning. Otherwise, tools risk becoming underused or inconsistently applied.

### **Project Description**

The white paper was developed in response to concerns expressed by teachers at a southeastern primary school regarding the inconsistent and ineffective implementation of PBIS, which had been mandated as part of the school's improvement plan. Although PBIS had been formally adopted, teachers reported its implementation varied widely across classrooms, suffered from insufficient administrative and peer support, and was constrained by limited time and material resources. Drawing on qualitative data gathered through semistructured interviews with 11 K–3 educators, the study identified four central themes: teachers reported the current implementation of PBIS is not generally effective, that their use of PBIS to manage behaviors was inconsistent, that there is a need for both individual and school-wide personal and professional support, and that teachers

require time and materials to implement PBIS fully. These results highlight the challenges obstructing PBIS's intended outcomes, emphasizing the essential need for fidelity in implementation, continuous professional development, and adequate support.

The white paper outlined the implementation of PBIS at a southeastern primary school, where the framework was mandated as part of a school improvement initiative. Despite this mandate, study findings revealed teachers experienced notable challenges, including inconsistent behavior management strategies, a lack of administrative support, and limited access to PBIS resources. These challenges aligned with existing research, which emphasized that the effectiveness of PBIS depended on adequate teacher training, structured implementation, and sustained support from leadership (Feuerborn et al., 2018; George et al., 2018; Simonsen & Sugai, 2019a). Developed in response to these findings, the white paper identified teachers' specific barriers and provided recommendations to address them. The white paper emphasized four key strategies: strengthening professional development and training, standardizing PBIS tools and practices, enhancing administrative and peer support systems, and ensuring sufficient allocation of materials. The intention is for the principal to review and share the document with the leadership team and teachers, thereby guiding the leadership team in developing a more consistent, collaborative, and sustainable PBIS framework throughout the school.

### **Needed Resources and Existing Supports**

Implementing the recommendations in the white paper will require the necessary resources and support. First, structured and ongoing professional development is essential to equip teachers with the knowledge and confidence needed for consistent PBIS

implementation. Research indicates differentiated and tiered professional development significantly enhances implementation fidelity and teacher buy-in (Bloomfield et al., 2024; Feuerborn et al., 2018). Additionally, administrative and peer support must be strengthened through active leadership involvement, consistent communication, and forming a PBIS support team to foster a collaborative culture (Anderson et al., 2019; Petrasek et al., 2022). Standardized tools, including a schoolwide behavior matrix, reinforcement guidelines, and access to behavior-tracking systems, are necessary to ensure classroom consistency (Simonsen & Sugai, 2019; Elrod et al., 2022). Finally, material and technological resources, such as behavior charts and customized reward systems, must be readily available and routinely restocked to sustain student engagement and effective practice (Childs et al., 2016; Flores, 2023). Allocating these resources strategically, by leveraging existing materials or developing new supports where needed, will help establish a more structured, collaborative, and sustainable schoolwide PBIS framework aligned with the school's improvement goals. At the study school, foundational PBIS components were already in place, including behavior expectations, signage, and some staff training materials. However, additional supports, including teacher training modules, progress monitoring tools, and student incentives, would need to be created or purchased, which may incur additional costs.

### **Potential Barriers and Solutions**

A potential barrier to implementing the recommendations outlined in the white paper is the persistent challenge of limited time and material resources in the instructional environment. The recommendation to allocate dedicated time to PBIS activities and

ensure access to consistent reinforcement materials may be difficult without adjustments to current scheduling and budgeting practices. Teachers reported that the demands of instructional pacing limited their ability to integrate behavioral reinforcement consistently, while shortages in materials such as behavior charts and student incentives further complicated implementation efforts. To address these challenges, school leadership should prioritize embedding PBIS activities into natural transitions during the school day and identify sustainable funding opportunities through grants, local partnerships, and efficient resource allocation. Additionally, adopting digital tracking systems and cost-effective, non-monetary student incentives can help ensure resource constraints do not undermine PBIS fidelity.

Another barrier to successfully implementing the recommendations is the inconsistent application of PBIS tools and the resistance of some staff members to standardized behavioral practices. Although the recommendations suggested a uniform behavior matrix, reinforcement strategies, and intervention procedures, significant inconsistency remains in how PBIS is practiced across classrooms. Some teachers fully align with schoolwide practices, while others lack familiarity or confidence in applying key strategies. Resistance to change may arise from concerns about autonomy or skepticism regarding the effectiveness of standardized approaches. To address this barrier, it is essential to provide teachers with differentiated professional development that includes modeling, hands-on practice, and collaborative opportunities to adapt tools to diverse classroom contexts. The school can foster collective ownership and enhance

fidelity by engaging teachers in improving standardized resources and emphasizing their significance through ongoing dialogue.

While the school has an established PBIS leadership team, a barrier to implementing the white paper recommendations is fully utilizing this resource to support schoolwide consistency and teacher collaboration. Although a leadership team exists, teachers reported that its involvement in day-to-day PBIS challenges and disseminating tools and practices could be improved. Opportunities for teachers to engage with the leadership team, reflect on behavioral data, and troubleshoot challenges are inconsistent or limited. To address this barrier, the PBIS leadership team should adopt a more visible and active role by facilitating regular grade-level meetings focused on reviewing PBIS data, offering coaching support for classroom-level implementation, and maintaining ongoing communication regarding schoolwide expectations. Enhancing the function of the existing leadership team will help teachers feel more supported and better equipped to apply PBIS strategies consistently.

The recommendation to strengthen professional development and teacher training also faces barriers due to limitations in sustained learning opportunities. Although introductory PBIS training is provided at the start of the academic year, teachers expressed that it is difficult to maintain momentum and refine practices throughout the year without mid-year refreshers, modeling, and mentoring opportunities. This gap in continuous professional learning reduces the impact of the white paper's recommendation to provide differentiated and ongoing training aligned to teachers' evolving needs. Addressing this barrier will require embedding PBIS professional development within

existing staff development structures, offering coaching cycles, and ensuring the PBIS leadership team models effective strategies during instructional walkthroughs. Sustained, embedded professional learning opportunities will enable teachers to deepen their implementation skills and promote more consistent application of PBIS expectations across the school.

Although the recommendations presented in the white paper were designed to strengthen the fidelity and sustainability of PBIS practices, several barriers must be addressed to achieve successful implementation. Limited time and material resources, variability in classroom practices, underutilization of the PBIS leadership team, and insufficient opportunities for ongoing professional learning present significant challenges. Through planning, increased support from the leadership team, and a focus on collaborative professional development, the school can overcome these barriers and move toward a more consistent, equitable, and effective PBIS framework.

### **Proposal for Implementation**

Upon receiving approval from Walden University for this doctoral study project, I will email the completed white paper to the principal of the southeastern primary school to request an appointment to present the project. At the principal's discretion, additional stakeholders may be invited to attend. Each participant will receive a printed copy of the white paper along with a one-page overview of the proposed action steps. During the meeting, I will outline the recommendations and provide context for the findings that informed them. Attendees will be encouraged to share feedback and ask questions about how the recommendations align with current expectations and practices. Following the

presentation, attendees will be invited to complete a formative evaluation questionnaire to assess the proposed recommendations' clarity, relevance, and feasibility. This feedback will inform potential revisions to the white paper to better meet the school's expectations and needs.

Following the presentation of the white paper to the principal, the proposed timeline outlines a phased approach to implementing the recommendations developed from the study. This plan is intended to promote consistent and collaborative use of PBIS throughout the school by strengthening professional development, providing needed resources, and building structured staff support.

The white paper will be submitted to the principal for review at the beginning of the 2025 academic year. After a brief review period, an initial meeting will be scheduled to discuss the study's findings and recommendations. If the principal approves the proposal, a formal presentation will be held with all teachers and key staff. This presentation will summarize the research findings, the implementation challenges identified by teachers, and four recommended strategies for improving classroom PBIS practices.

Ideally, the principal will start coordinating professional development sessions, possibly with support from the assistant principal, grade-level chairs, and the school's PBIS team, within the first few weeks of the school year. These sessions will strengthen teacher understanding of PBIS expectations, reinforcement strategies, and intervention practices. Teachers will also be introduced to updated PBIS tools and consistent

classroom materials, including a schoolwide behavior matrix and reinforcement templates.

Teachers will begin participating in structured PBIS training sessions by the ninth week of the semester. These sessions will address the practical application of core PBIS strategies and include guidance on using behavior-tracking tools. Teachers will have opportunities to collaborate during these sessions to promote shared understanding and consistency in implementation.

From weeks ten through twelve, grade-level teams will begin integrating PBIS-focused planning into regular biweekly meetings. These discussions will allow teachers to reflect on training, identify areas of need, and support one another in refining implementation strategies. In week thirteen, a PBIS support team may be established, consisting of one nominated teacher from each grade level, the grade-level chair, and representatives from the PBIS leadership committee. This team will meet to determine a schedule for continued collaboration, planning, and progress monitoring.

Full implementation of the PBIS framework outlined in the white paper will begin at the start of the following school year. The revised approach will be integrated into daily instructional routines, supported by administrative oversight, peer collaboration, and resource access. Ongoing meetings and training opportunities will ensure continued fidelity and provide space for teachers and school leaders to address challenges as they arise.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of the Researcher**

As the researcher, my primary responsibilities include presenting the research findings to the principal and developing a comprehensive project outlining evidence-based interventions. Based on the themes from the data analysis, I have selected a white paper as the most effective format for communicating the study's findings and recommendations. I will present the white paper to the principal of the study school and other stakeholders invited by the principal for an in-depth analysis of the research findings. Additionally, the presentation will outline recommendations to enhance PBIS implementation at the school. As part of the project's formative evaluation, I will collect, review, and analyze stakeholder feedback to assess the impact of the white paper and guide improvements.

### **Project Evaluation Plan**

The white paper was developed in response to themes from the data analysis. The white paper is designed to present detailed information about the problem and research findings. The white paper provides recommendations for enhancing PD, strengthening support systems, standardizing PBIS tools and practices, and ensuring adequate material allocation. I decided to develop a white paper because a few days of PD will not meet the ongoing, general needs of the study school. The effectiveness of the white paper will be assessed through a formative evaluation, which includes a questionnaire. (Appendix A). A formative approach is appropriate given the project's intent to support ongoing development and improvement in PBIS implementation (Creswell, 2012a).

**Justification for Type of Evaluation**

A formative evaluation will be conducted after the presentation of the white paper to collect feedback from key stakeholders. The questionnaire included questions designed to gather both quantitative and qualitative data, assessing the understanding of the recommendations outlined in the white paper. Quantitative data will be gathered using a 5-point Likert scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), to evaluate participants' agreement with statements about the recommendations. Additionally, open-ended questions were used to collect qualitative data, giving participants the opportunity to elaborate on their perceptions. This approach aligned with Creswell's (2012b) assertion that combining data types enhanced the credibility of evaluation findings. By incorporating both response types, the questionnaire provided a comprehensive view of how the white paper is received and identify areas for potential improvement. The evaluation results will guide revisions to ensure the white paper effectively supports consistent PBIS implementation in schools. This evaluation method builds on the stakeholder feedback process outlined during the white paper presentation.

**Goals of the Evaluation**

The overall goal of the white paper was to provide school leadership with a structured, evidence-based plan to enhance the implementation of PBIS at the study school. This goal was based on qualitative feedback gathered from K–3 teachers, who indicated discrepancies in PBIS practices, insufficient administrative and peer support, and limited access to the necessary materials for implementation. In response, the white paper presented four strategic recommendations: strengthening professional development

and training, enhancing support systems, standardizing PBIS tools and practices, and ensuring the availability of necessary resources. These strategies are grounded in current research and align with best practices for maintaining fidelity in PBIS systems (Simonsen & Sugai, 2019a). By integrating teacher feedback with practical, schoolwide strategies, the white paper aims to assist leadership in fostering a more consistent, collaborative, and sustainable approach to behavior management. The evaluation is designed to determine whether the white paper's content and recommendations successfully address the core implementation challenges identified in the study.

### **Key Stakeholders**

The primary stakeholders for this project include the school's administrators, leadership team, and K–3 classroom teachers. These individuals are responsible for shaping, implementing, and sustaining PBIS practices within the school environment. Based on the study's findings, teachers were instrumental in identifying areas of concern related to PBIS implementation, providing firsthand insight into inconsistencies in practice, limited support, and the need for additional resources and training. Their input served as the foundation for the white paper's recommendations. The leadership team, including the principal and assistant principal, plays a key role in reviewing the white paper, allocating resources, and guiding the implementation process. Their involvement is essential for building schoolwide consistency and supporting professional development. Administrators also act as instructional leaders who model expectations, reinforce accountability, and facilitate collaboration across grade levels. Engaging these

stakeholders ensures the recommendations presented in the white paper are grounded in the school's operational realities and have the support needed for long-term success.

### **Project Implications**

I chose to develop a white paper because occasional professional development sessions alone may not fully address the ongoing schoolwide needs related to PBIS implementation. The white paper was created in response to the challenges and inconsistencies reported by teachers, as revealed through qualitative data collected from K–3 teachers. The findings indicated a need for improved consistency in PBIS practices, more substantial administrative and peer support, and better access to the time and materials necessary for implementation. The white paper presents these findings alongside relevant research and outlines a structured, research-based action plan for enhancing PBIS practices across the school. The recommendations support current teachers and inform the development of training and support systems for new faculty members who did not participate in the initial PBIS onboarding. This white paper presents strategies to foster a more unified, collaborative, and sustainable approach to schoolwide behavior management by addressing ongoing issues and needs.

This project promotes positive social change by enhancing the implementation of PBIS, benefiting local stakeholders and the broader educational community. At the local school level, school administrators are provided with a research-informed framework to strengthen PBIS practices, allocate resources more strategically, and offer ongoing support for teachers. Teachers benefit from specialized professional development and access to standardized tools for more consistent and effective behavior management.

With this support, teachers can create structured classroom environments, increase student engagement, and reduce disruptions. In a broader context, these improvements will promote positive social change by enhancing student behavior in the classroom. Creating a more supportive learning environment enables students to engage productively and develop self-regulation skills.

### **Summary**

In Section 3, findings from the research on K–3 teachers' perceptions of implementing PBIS at a southeastern primary school were presented. Teachers expressed concerns about inconsistent implementation, limited administrative support, and a lack of time and resources. In response, a white paper was developed with four key recommendations: strengthening professional development and training, enhancing support systems, standardizing PBIS tools and practices, and ensuring sufficient resource allocation. The white paper serves as a practical guide, translating research findings into actionable strategies to enhance PBIS fidelity and effectiveness. Section 3 also explained the rationale for choosing the white paper format, included a literature review supporting the strategy, and outlined an implementation and evaluation plan.

In Section 4, the project's strengths and limitations, consideration of alternative approaches, and the personal and professional growth experienced throughout this research process will be discussed. This section will also include conclusions and recommendations for future research and practices related to PBIS implementation.

#### Section 4: Reflections and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to address a problem identified by teachers at the study site. Teachers were concerned that although PBIS had been implemented, the model was not effectively managing students' disruptive behaviors. Teachers reported inconsistent implementation, insufficient training, and limited access to necessary support, all of which contributed to their perception that PBIS was not producing the desired behavioral outcomes. To investigate this issue, I gathered and analyzed qualitative data from 11 K–3 teachers who had implemented PBIS for at least one full academic year. These teachers shared experiences about how PBIS functioned in their classrooms, including which aspects were effective and which posed challenges. In addition to describing their day-to-day use of PBIS strategies, participants also offered insights into what was needed to strengthen the program's implementation and overall effectiveness. I developed a white paper as the final project based on these findings. A white paper offers a more sustainable solution by presenting research-based recommendations in a format facilitating long-term application. Creswell (2012a) emphasized the importance of delivering findings directly serving the target audience's needs, while Hayes (2019) highlighted the value of practical tools that translate research into action.

Section 4 of this study presents the project's strengths, limitations, and recommendations for alternative approaches. It also discusses the project's contributions to scholarship, development, evaluation, and leadership for change. The section

concludes with a personal reflection on the study's significance and implications for practice within the local school setting and broader educational contexts.

### **Project Strengths**

One of the key strengths of this project is that the white paper offers actionable, research-informed recommendations directly addressing the challenges identified in the study's findings. The chosen format allowed for the integration of teacher voice, relevant scholarship, and practical strategies, all communicated in a manner accessible and meaningful to diverse stakeholders within the school community. According to Malone and Wright (2017), white papers were more effective when they informed and persuaded stakeholders toward strategic action. In this case, the white paper's structure addressed real-world implementation issues while ensuring the recommendations were comprehensible and immediately applicable. By aligning its format and content with its intended audience's needs, the white paper serves as a user-centered tool that supports practical improvements in PBIS implementation.

A second notable strength is the white paper's alignment with the existing literature, which emphasizes the importance of sustained, job-embedded professional development. Rather than advocating for isolated, one-time training sessions, the project promotes a long-term professional learning model that includes ongoing development, peer mentorship, and reinforcement strategies. This approach aligned with the findings of Neely et al. (2020), who emphasized that embedding professional learning into daily practice was more likely to lead to lasting instructional change. Moreover, the white paper supports the schoolwide consistency necessary to implement PBIS with fidelity, a

factor scholars identify as critical for program sustainability and impact (Simonsen & Sugai, 2019a). By positioning PD as a continuous process, the project increases the likelihood teachers will receive the support needed to implement PBIS effectively.

Finally, the white paper is grounded in practical application, making it exceptionally responsive to the needs expressed by participating teachers. Recommendations such as standardizing behavior matrices, improving administrative involvement, and ensuring sufficient time and materials for implementation reflect both evidence-based PBIS practices and teacher-identified priorities. These strategies are consistent with recommendations in the literature, which emphasize the importance of aligning interventions with the contextual realities of classroom practice (Feuerborn et al., 2018; Simonsen & Sugai, 2019a). This dual alignment enhances the relevance and feasibility of the proposed actions, increasing the likelihood of stakeholder buy-in and sustained adoption. When educators see their voices reflected in practical solutions tailored to their specific context, they are more inclined to engage with and invest in the work.

### **Project Limitations**

I identified three primary limitations in developing and applying the white paper project. First, its success is heavily dependent on the commitment of school leadership and staff. As Neely et al. (2020) observed, even the most thoughtfully designed improvement plans are unlikely to succeed without engaged and sustained leadership. Factors such as administrative turnover, competing school priorities, or a lack of stakeholder buy-in may significantly disrupt implementation efforts. Therefore, the

impact of the white paper hinges not only on the strength of its recommendations but also on the organizational climate and leadership continuity within the school.

In addition to leadership commitment, a second limitation concerns potential inconsistencies in how the white paper's recommendations are interpreted and applied across classrooms and staff members. The findings and resulting recommendations emerged from qualitative data collected at a single primary school, based on the perceptions of a relatively small group of K–3 teachers. Although the white paper integrates broader research on PBIS and professional development, the core content is grounded in localized experiences and challenges. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) emphasized that effective professional learning must be context-sensitive. As such, schools with differing student demographics, administrative structures, or levels of PBIS familiarity may need to adapt the recommendations to fit their unique environments.

Ultimately, the practicality of implementation depends on the availability of time, funding, and logistical resources coordination. Several proposed strategies, such as extended professional development, peer mentorship programs, and expanded materials for behavior reinforcement, require ongoing financial investment and administrative planning. Even well-designed recommendations may fail to achieve their intended outcomes without adequate resource allocation or institutional support. Strategic prioritization by school leaders will be necessary to ensure these initiatives are introduced and sustained over time.

### **Recommendations for Alternative Approaches**

Another way to address the problem in the white paper would be to focus on improving the fidelity of PBIS implementation across the school. Even though the school has a PBIS framework, the program's success depends on how consistently and accurately teachers apply it in their classrooms. Key components such as using behavior matrices, applying reinforcement systems, and teaching behavioral expectations must be implemented with fidelity for PBIS to be successful. McIntosh et al. (2020) emphasized that when PBIS is inconsistently implemented, it reduces the likelihood of achieving positive student outcomes, underscoring the importance of applying it correctly across all classrooms.

To address this problem, the school could conduct fidelity audits and classroom observations to assess the effectiveness of PBIS strategies. Teachers could complete self-assessments to reflect on their practices and identify areas where they need more support. Professional development should focus on helping teachers apply PBIS strategies correctly and consistently, including showing examples and offering practice opportunities. Setting up ongoing fidelity checks through peer observations and feedback cycles during Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) would help teachers stay consistent over time. By improving PBIS fidelity, the school can strengthen behavioral outcomes, build a more supportive school climate, and ensure PBIS is implemented as intended.

## **Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change**

The research and development process for creating my white paper significantly deepened my understanding of the demands and complexities of scholarly inquiry, project design, and leadership for change. As Bloomfield et al. (2024) emphasized, engaging systematically with research strengthens critical thinking, evidence-based analysis, and practical application. I learned research is not a linear process; it demands persistence, critical discernment, and flexibility. Identifying gaps in practice, aligning research questions with interview protocols, and selecting appropriate methods required intellectual agility I had not previously needed. Through sustained engagement with thematic analysis and reflective evaluation, I advanced my academic writing and built the scholarly depth necessary to support effective practice change in educational contexts.

As a scholar, I developed the ability to move beyond passive research consumption toward active engagement with the scholarly community. Applying qualitative research techniques grounded in thematic analysis helped me extract patterns from semistructured interviews, organize emerging themes, and situate findings within the broader literature (Strickland-Cohen et al., 2019). This deeper engagement helped me recognize the value of multiple perceptions when forming evidence-based recommendations. The white paper process demonstrated that scholarly work must bridge theory and real-world conditions, reinforcing the importance of thoughtful synthesis and critical evaluation to inform meaningful solutions for practice.

The experience of designing the project also expanded my professional growth. Translating interview findings into clear, actionable strategies required strategic planning, audience awareness, and careful attention to systemic factors within the school environment. Flores (2023) highlighted that real-world application demands an understanding of contextual complexities alongside theoretical knowledge. Listening to teachers describe barriers such as inconsistent administrative support, limited time, and lack of resources helped me design realistic and responsive recommendations. This experience taught me that effective project development involves applying research and navigating organizational realities with empathy and adaptability.

Leadership development emerged naturally through the research and writing process. Conceptualizing the white paper as a catalyst for change required adopting a leadership orientation grounded in collaboration, trust, and evidence-based advocacy. Benedetti (2024) emphasized successful leadership within educational change efforts must empower and support teachers rather than impose directives. By focusing on the recommendations on professional development, administrative support, standardized tools, and resource allocation, I aimed to build leadership strategies honoring teacher voice and systemic equity. Completing this process solidified my understanding that scholarly leadership involves creating structures where research informs action in sustainable and meaningful ways for all stakeholders.

Reflecting on this journey, it is evident, through the research and development of the white paper, I experienced profound growth in both my academic and professional

capacities. Integrating scholarship, project development, and leadership has shaped my approach to educational problem-solving and solidified my commitment to evidence-driven practice. I am prepared to critically engage with literature, design research-informed interventions, and lead initiatives to foster collaborative, lasting improvements within educational settings.

### **Reflection on the Importance of the Work**

Completing this study and white paper project was an important milestone in my academic and professional journey. I selected the white paper format because my research found that extending instructional planning and professional development beyond the initial PBIS training was necessary to address the challenges teachers faced. A few isolated training sessions were insufficient to meet the deeper, ongoing needs teachers identified; a pattern aligns with research emphasizing the importance of sustained professional development for lasting change (Bloomfield et al., 2024). The white paper enabled me to develop a plan grounded in teachers' authentic experiences and to offer clear, research-based recommendations to support practical improvements at the school level.

Through developing this project, I learned how critical it is to listen carefully to practitioners when designing solutions. The interviews revealed essential insights into how teacher perceptions affect the success of initiatives such as PBIS, an observation supported by Petrusek et al. (2022). I came to see successful implementation depended on setting clear expectations and ensuring teachers fully understood program goals, felt consistently supported, and had access to the time and materials needed to succeed. This

lesson reminded me of my own classroom experiences, where checking for understanding was essential to helping students master new skills. Likewise, understanding and responding to teachers' experiences is necessary for building successful, sustainable programs.

One of the most significant lessons I gained through this project was recognizing the complexity of translating research into practice. Although PBIS is well-supported in research, the findings showed teachers struggled with inconsistent implementation, limited administrative and peer support, and a lack of sufficient resources and time. These challenges mirror broader patterns identified by the Center on PBIS (2023), emphasizing strong evidence-based frameworks can falter without strong support systems. I realized professional development must be more than an event; it must be ongoing, collaborative, and responsive to the daily realities teachers face in their classrooms.

This project also strengthened my understanding of the importance of collaboration. Across the interviews, the need for structured opportunities for teachers to share ideas, discuss challenges, and collectively build knowledge stood out. Flores (2023) highlighted professional learning thrives in environments where teachers feel connected and supported by one another, not isolated. Through this work, I came to see collaboration not just as helpful but as essential for sustainable instructional change.

Overall, this white paper project allowed me to apply my learning in a real-world context, pushing me to think beyond theory toward practical solutions that could support systemic improvement. It deepened my understanding of the real barriers teachers face,

enhanced my ability to create actionable recommendations, and reinforced my commitment to bridging research and practice. Most importantly, it reminded me that educational change requires more than good intentions; it demands clear communication, responsive support, and a deep respect for educators' perceptions and expertise.

### **Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research**

The findings from this study could promote positive social change at the participating primary school by addressing critical barriers to the consistent implementation of PBIS. The school can create a more collaborative and supportive learning environment by strengthening professional development, enhancing administrative and peer support systems, standardizing PBIS tools and practices, and allocating adequate time and resources. Improved PBIS fidelity may lead to clearer behavioral expectations, reduced disruptions, and stronger teacher-student relationships, ultimately fostering a more equitable and productive academic setting. Over time, these improvements can support broader social change by promoting student well-being and equipping young people with the behavioral and social-emotional skills necessary to become more engaged, respectful, and responsible members of society. When scaled across schools and districts, such outcomes could contribute to a more socially cohesive, emotionally intelligent, and civically engaged population, reducing disciplinary disparities and supporting long-term societal equity and productivity.

Using the semistructured interview methodologically enabled the gathering of rich, detailed insights from teachers actively participating in PBIS implementation. This approach demonstrated that practitioners' perceptions are critical to understanding the

nuances of behavior management frameworks in real-world settings. Theoretically, the study supports existing PBIS models, emphasizing the importance of administrative support, professional development, and consistent practices. However, the findings also extend the current understanding by highlighting teachers' ongoing challenges when time, resources, and consistent communication are limited. Empirically, the study contributes to the growing literature on PBIS in primary schools by providing a localized example of how school-based supports, or their absence, directly affect implementation fidelity.

The recommendations outlined in the white paper offer practical guidance for school leadership. Strengthening professional development by providing sustained, hands-on training year-round is critical for building teacher confidence and consistency. Enhancing administrative visibility and support, ensuring consistent application of standardized PBIS tools, and improving access to materials and reinforcement options are necessary to sustain effective practices. Additionally, better utilizing the existing PBIS leadership team to offer coaching support, facilitate regular discussions, and reinforce behavioral expectations can further strengthen implementation efforts. Teacher feedback directly informs practical applications and aligns with the school's improvement plan.

Future research should continue to explore the influence of sustained professional development on teacher implementation of PBIS strategies over time. Examining the long-term effects of standardizing PBIS tools and improving leadership support could offer valuable insights into sustaining fidelity across school years. Additionally, investigating how increased parental involvement might influence student engagement with PBIS expectations would address an area briefly mentioned by participants but not

deeply explored. Expanding future research to encompass a wider range of primary school settings could yield deeper insights into how environmental factors influence the success of implementation efforts. PBIS initiatives. Ongoing research grounded in practitioner experience remains essential for refining PBIS implementation and ensuring behavioral support frameworks meet the practical needs of educators and students.

### **Summary**

The findings from this study revealed that the successful implementation of PBIS at the study school depends on strengthening professional development, enhancing administrative and peer support, standardizing PBIS tools and practices, and allocating adequate resources. Teachers consistently reported inconsistent practice, limited access to materials, and insufficient opportunities for sustained professional learning, creating significant barriers to PBIS fidelity. Addressing these challenges requires planning, consistent leadership involvement, and a focus on building teacher capacity through ongoing support and collaboration. By implementing the recommendations outlined in the white paper, the school can create a more consistent, equitable, and supportive learning environment that benefits students and teachers. These findings reinforced the importance of aligning schoolwide initiatives with teacher needs and experiences to ensure behavioral support systems are practical, sustainable, and meaningful in daily classroom practice.

## References

- Anderson, K. P., Ritter, G. W., & Zamarro, G. (2019). Understanding a vicious cycle: The relationship between student discipline and student academic outcomes. *Educational Researcher, 48*(5), 251-262.  
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189x19848720>
- Barrett, A., Kajamaa, A., & Johnston, J. (2020). How to ... be reflexive when conducting qualitative research. *Clinical Teacher, 17*(1), 9-12.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/tct.13133>
- Baule, S. M. (2020). The impact of positive behavior intervention support (PBIS) on suspensions by race and ethnicity in an urban school district. *AASA Journal of Scholarship & Practice, 16*(4), 45-56.
- Benedetti, M. (2024). The impact of professional development on PBIS fidelity: A mixed-methods study. *Educational Psychology Review, 36*(1), 45–68.
- Berg, K. (2021). Schoolwide positive behaviour support: The positive effects and barriers to sustainability. *BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education, 13*(1), 41–46.
- Bethune, K. S. (2017). Effects of coaching on teachers' implementation of tier 1 schoolwide positive behavioral interventions and support strategies. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 19*(3), 131-142.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300716680095>
- Bloomfield, B. S., Fox, R. A., & Leif, E. S. (2024). Multi-tiered systems of educator professional development: A systematic literature review. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 26*(3), 168–188.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/10983007231224028>

- Bornstein, J. (2015). "If they're on Tier I, there are really no concerns we can see": PBIS medicalizes compliant behavior. *Journal of Ethnographic & Qualitative Research*, 9, 247–267. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319244276>
- Bruhn, A., Gorsh, J., & Hannan, C. (2014). Simple strategies for reflecting on and responding to common criticisms of PBIS. *Journal of Special Education Leadership*, 27(1), 28-36.
- Butin, D. W. (2010). *The education dissertation: A guide for practitioner scholars*. Corwin Press.
- Camacho, D. A., & Parham, B. (2019). Urban teacher challenges: What they are and what we can learn from them. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 85, 160–174. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2019.06.014>
- Center on PBIS. (2023). *Supporting and responding to educators' classroom PBIS implementation needs: Guide to classroom systems and data*. University of Oregon. <https://www.pbis.org/resource/supporting-and-responding-to-educators-classroom-pbis-implementation-needs>
- Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526485656>
- Childs, K. E., Kincaid, D., George, H. P., & Gage, N. A. (2016). The relationship between schoolwide implementation of positive behavior intervention and supports and student discipline outcomes. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 18(2), 89–99. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300715590398>

- Chitiyo, J., & May, M. E. (2018). Factors predicting sustainability of the schoolwide positive behavior intervention support model. *Preventing School Failure, 62*(2), 94–104. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1045988x.2017.1385446>
- Chitiyo, M., & Wheeler, J. J. (2009). Challenges faced by schoolteachers in implementing positive behavior support in their school system. *Remedial and Special Education, 30*, 58–63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741932508315049>
- Chuang, C., Reinke, W. M., & Herman, K. C. (2020). Effects of a universal classroom management teacher training program on elementary children with aggressive behaviors. *School Psychology, 35*(2), 128–136. <https://doi.org/10.1037/spq0000351>
- Clayton, J., Robertson, D., & Sotomayor, T. (2020). Opportunities and access: Exploring how school district leaders make meaning of equity in practice through positive behavioral interventions and supports. *International Journal of Education Policy and Leadership, 16*(4). <https://doi.org/10.22230/ijepl.2020v16n4a878>
- Clonan, S. M., McDougal, J. L., Clark, K., & Davison, S. (2007). Use of office discipline referrals in schoolwide decision making: A practical example. *Psychology in the Schools, 44*, 19–27. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.20202>
- Coşkun, K. (2019). Conditioning tendency among preschool and primary school children: Cross-sectional research. *Interchange: A Quarterly Review of Education, 50*(4), 517–536. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10780-019-09373-1>
- Creswell, J. W. (2012a). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Pearson.

- Creswell, J. W. (2012b). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. Plenum. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4899-2271-7>
- DeJager, B., Houlihan, D., Filter, K. J., Mackie, P. F. E., & Klein, L. (2020). Comparing the effectiveness and ease of implementation of token economy, response cost, and a combination condition in rural elementary school classrooms. *Journal of Rural Mental Health, 44*(1), 39–50. <https://doi.org/10.1037/rmh0000131>
- Elrod, B. G., Rice, K. G., & Meyers, J. (2022). PBIS fidelity, school climate, and student discipline: A longitudinal study of secondary schools. *Psychology in the Schools, 59*(1), 31–48. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22614>
- Feuerborn, L., & Chinn, D. (2012). Teacher perceptions of student needs and implications for positive behavior supports. *Behavioral Disorders, 37*(4), 219–231. <https://doi.org/10.1177/019874291203700403>
- Feuerborn, L. L., Tyre, A. D., & Beaudoin, K. (2018). Classified staff perceptions of behavior and discipline: Implications for schoolwide positive behavior supports. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 20*(2), 101-112. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300717733975>
- Filter, K. J., Sytsma, M. R., & McIntosh, K. (2016). A brief measure of staff commitment to implement schoolwide positive behavioral interventions and supports. *Assessment for Effective Intervention, 42*(1), 18–31.
- Floress, M. T., & Jacoby, A. L. (2017). The Caterpillar Game: A SW-PBIS Aligned

- Classroom Management System. *Journal of Applied School Psychology*, 33(1), 16-42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15377903.2016.1229706>
- Gagnon, J. C., Barber, B. R., & Soy Turk, I. (2020). Policies and practices supporting PBIS implementation in high-poverty Florida middle schools. *Exceptionality*, 28(3), 133–148. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09362835.2020.1727333>
- Gage, N. A., Grasley-Boy, N., Peshak George, H., Childs, K., & Kincaid, D. (2019). A quasi-experimental design analysis of the effects of schoolwide positive behavior interventions and supports on discipline in Florida. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 21(1), 50-61. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300718768208>
- Gage, N. A., Lee, A., Grasley-Boy, N., & Peshak George, H. (2018a). The impact of schoolwide positive behavior interventions and supports on school suspensions: A statewide quasi-experimental analysis. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 20(4), 217–226. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300718768204>
- Gage, N. A., Scott, T., Hirn, R., & MacSuga-Gage, A. S. (2018b). The relationship between teachers' implementation of classroom management practices and student behavior in elementary school. *Behavioral Disorders*, 43(2), 302–315. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0198742917714809>
- Gage, N. A., Whitford, D. K., & Katsiyannis, A. (2018c). A review of schoolwide positive behavior interventions and supports as a framework for reducing disciplinary exclusions. *The Journal of Special Education*, 52(3), 142–151. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022466918767847>
- Macy, M., & Wheeler, T. (2020). Positive behavioral interventions and supports: factors

that influence teacher buy-in. *The International Journal of Educational Organization and Leadership*, 28 (1), 17-33. <https://doi.org/10.18848/2329-1656/CGP/v28i01/17-33>

George, H. P., Cox, K. E., Minch, D., & Sandomierski, T. (2018). District practices associated with successful SWPBIS implementation. *Behavioral Disorders*, 43(3), 393–406. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0198742917753612>

Glesne, C. (2016). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (5th ed.). Pearson.

Griffith, D., & Tyner, A. (2019). *Discipline reform through the eyes of teachers*. Thomas B. Fordham Institute. <https://fordhaminstitute.org/national/research/discipline-reform-through-eyes-teachers>

Grossoehme, D. H. (2014). Overview of qualitative research. *Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy*, 20(3), 109-122. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08854726.2014.925660>

Hayes, C. (2019). *Beyond behavior: Applying practical tools to integrate PBIS and social-emotional learning in schools*. Solution Tree Press.

Horner, R. H., & Macaya, M. M. (2018). A framework for building safe and effective school environments: Positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS). *Pedagogická orientace*, 28(4), 663–685. <https://journals.muni.cz/pedor/article/view/11441>

Houchens, G. W., Zhang, J., Davis, K., Niu, C., Chon, K. H., & Miller, S. (2017). The impact of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports on teachers' perceptions of teaching conditions and student achievement. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 19(3), 168–179. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300717696938>

- James, A. G., Noltemeyer, A., Ritchie, R., Palmer, K., & University, M. (2019). Longitudinal disciplinary and achievement outcomes associated with school-wide PBIS implementation level. *Psychology in the Schools, 56*(9), 1512-1521. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22282>
- Judkins, M., Bosworth, K., & Garcia, R. (2019). Leadership team components leading to implementation success: An exploratory study. *Journal of School Leadership, 29*(5), 409–426. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1052684619858835>
- Karlberg, M., Klang, N., & Svahn, J. (2024). Positive behavior support in school: A quasi-experimental mixed methods study and a randomized controlled trial. *BMC Psychology, 12*(1), 521. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-024-02021-z>
- Kim, J., McIntosh, K., Mercer, S. H., & Nese, R. N. T. (2018). Longitudinal associations between SWPBIS fidelity of implementation and behavior and academic outcomes. *Behavioral Disorders, 43*(3), 357–369. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0198742917747589>
- Kohn, A. (1993). *Punished by rewards: The trouble with gold stars, incentive plans, A's, praise, and other bribes*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Leach, D., & Helf, S. (2016). Using a hierarchy of supportive consequences to address problem behaviors in the classroom. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 52*, 29–33. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1053451216630288>
- Lewis, T. J., & Sugai, G. (2017). Effective Behavior Support: A Systems Approach to Proactive Schoolwide Management. *Focus on Exceptional Children, 31*(6). <https://doi.org/10.17161/foec.v31i6.6767>

- Malone, E. M., & Wright, D. (2017). “To promote that demand”: Toward the history of the marketing white paper as a genre. *Journal of Business & Technical Communication*, 32(1), 113-147. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1050651917729861>
- Massar, M. M., Horner, R. H., Kittelman, A., & Conley, K. M. (2022). Mechanisms of effective coaching: Using prompting and performance feedback to improve teacher and student outcomes. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10983007221133524>
- McIntosh, K., Predy, L. K., Upreti, G., Hume, A. E., Turri, M. G., & Mathews, S. (2013). Perceptions of contextual features related to implementation and sustainability of schoolwide positive behavior support. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 16(1), 31–43. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300712470723>
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Molloy, L. E., Moore, J. E., Trail, J., Van Epps, J. J., & Hopfer, S. (2013). Understanding real-world implementation quality and “active ingredients” of PBIS. *Prevention Science: The Official Journal of the Society for Prevention Research*, 14(6), 593–605. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-012-0343-9>
- Neely, L., Lane, C., & Castro-Villarreal, F. (2020). Using coaching with video analysis to improve teachers' classroom management practices: Methods to increase implementation fidelity. *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education*, 20(2), 219–240. <https://www.learntechlib.org/primary/p/215683/>
- Nelson, C. M., & Kauffman, J. M. (2020). A commentary on the special issue: Promoting

use of positive reinforcement in schools. *Beyond Behavior*, 29(2), 116–118.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1074295620934707>

Nichols, J. A., Nichols, W. D., & Rupley, W. H. (2020). Teacher efficacy and attributes on the implementation of tiered instructional frameworks. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education*, 9(3), 731–742.

<http://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v9i3.20625>

Noltemeyer, A., Palmer, K., James, A. G., & Petrusek, M. (2019). Disciplinary and achievement outcomes associated with schoolwide positive behavioral interventions and supports implementation level. *School Psychology Review*, 48(1), 81–87. <https://doi.org/10.17105/SPR-2017-0131.V48-1>

Oakes, W. P., Cantwell, E. D., Lane, K. L., Royer, D. J., & Common, E. A. (2020). Examining educators' views of classroom management and instructional strategies: School-site capacity for supporting students' behavioral needs. *Preventing School Failure*, 64(1), 1–11.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1045988X.2018.1523125>

Owens, J. S., Exner-Cortens, D., DeShazer, M., & Seipp, J. (2023). Elementary school teachers' self-assessment of use of positive behavior support strategies and goal setting related to equity-focused features. *Education Sciences*, 13(8), 847.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13080847>

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). SAGE Publications.

Pershing, J. A. (2015). White paper. *Performance Improvement*, 54(8), 6–14.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/pfi.21505>

- Petrasek, M., James, A., Noltemeyer, A., Green, J., & Palmer, K. (2022). Enhancing motivation and engagement within a PBIS framework. *Improving Schools*, 25(1), 37–51. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13654802211002299>
- Reinke, W. M., Herman, K. C., & Stormont, M. (2014). Classroom-level positive behavior supports in schools implementing SW-PBIS: Identifying areas for enhancement. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 15(1), 39–50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300712459079>
- Rholetter, W. (2019). *Positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS)*. Salem Press Encyclopedia.
- Ritchie, J. (2014). *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*. SAGE Publications.
- Robertson, R. E., Kokina, A. A., & Moore, D. W. (2020). Barriers to implementing behavior intervention plans: Results of a statewide survey. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 22(3), 145–155. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300720908013>
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2011). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data (3rd ed.)*. SAGE Publications.
- Ryoo, J. H., Hong, S., Bart, W. M., Shin, J., & Bradshaw, C. P. (2018). Investigating the effect of schoolwide positive behavioral interventions and supports on student learning and behavioral problems in elementary and middle schools. *Psychology in the Schools*, 55(6), 629–643. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22134>

- Santiago-Rosario, M. R., McIntosh, K., & Payno-Simmons, R. (2022). *Centering equity within the PBIS framework: Overview and evidence of effectiveness*. Center on PBIS, University of Oregon. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/365449417>
- Saripah, I., & Widiastuti, H. T. (2019). Profile of off-task behavior in primary school students. *Elementary School Forum*, 6(2), 174–184.  
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1265578.pdf>
- Scherer, C. A., & Ingle, W. K. (2020). PBIS implementation fidelity and student outcomes in an urban school district. *Voices of Reform*, 3(1), 34–56.  
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1311449.pdf>
- Shinn, M. M., Timmer, S. G., Torres, E. L., & Weir, A. E. (2024). Teacher–Child Interaction Training—Group Coaching (TCIT-GC): Removing barriers to advancing classroom behavioral health. *Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching & Learning*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JRIT-03-2024-0061>
- Simonsen, B., Freeman, J., Dooley, K., Maddock, E., Kern, L., & Myers, D. (2022). School-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports: A blueprint for systems change. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 24(3), 187–200.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/20473869.2022.2116232>
- Simonsen, B., Freeman, J., Dooley, K., Maddock, E., Kern, L., & Myers, D. (2014). Multitiered support framework for teachers' classroom-management practices: Overview and case study of building the triangle for teachers. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 16(3), 179–190.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300713484062>

- Simonsen, B., & Sugai, G. (2019a). Behavior modeling and PBIS fidelity: The influence of professional development. *Behavioral Interventions*, 34(1), 67-83.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/bin.1656>
- Simonsen, B., & Sugai, G. (2019b). School-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports: A systems-level application of behavioral principles. *Behavioral interventions in schools: Evidence-based positive strategies (2nd ed.)*, 35-60.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0000126-003>
- Skinner, B. F. (1963). Operant behavior. *American Psychologist*, 18(8), 503–515.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/h0045185>
- Stelzner, M. A. (2007). *Writing white papers: How to capture readers and keep them engaged*. WhitePaperSource Publishing.
- Stoiber, K. C., Gettinger, M., Bella, Z. A., & Monahan, K. L. (2022). Exploratory Analysis of a Consultative Coaching Model Applied in Early Childhood Classrooms. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 32(3), 266-293. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10474412.2021.1984930>
- Strickland-Cohen, M. K., Pinkelman, S. E., Jimerson, J. B., Berg, T. A., Pinkney, C. J., & McIntosh, K. (2019). Sustaining effective individualized behavior support: Barriers and enablers. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, 63(1), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1045988x.2018.1456399>
- Sugai, G., & Horner, R. H. (2020). Sustaining and scaling positive behavioral interventions and supports: Implementation drivers, outcomes, and considerations. *Exceptional Children*, 86(2), 120–136.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0014402919855331>

Sugai, G., & Horner, R. H. (2006). A promising approach for expanding and sustaining schoolwide positive behavior support. *School Psychology Review, 35*(2), 245–259. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02796015.2006.12087989>

Sugai, G., & Simonsen, B. (2012). *Positive behavioral interventions and supports: History, defining features, and misconceptions*. Center for PBIS & Center for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, University of Connecticut. <https://www.pbis.org/resource/positive-behavioral-interventions-and-supports-history-defining-features-and-misconceptions>

Tyre, A., Feuerborn, L., Beaudoin, K., & Bruce, J. (2020). Middle school teachers' concerns for implementing the principles of SWPBIS. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 22*(2), 93–104. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300719867858>

Tyre, A. D., & Feuerborn, L. L. (2017). The minority report: The concerns of staff opposed to schoolwide positive behavior interventions and supports in their schools. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 27*(2), 145–172. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10474412.2016.1235977>

Tyre, A. D., Feuerborn, L. L., & Woods, L. (2018). Staff concerns in schools planning for and implementing schoolwide positive behavior interventions and supports. *Contemporary School Psychology, 22*, 77–89. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40688-017-0130-5>

Wills, H., Wehby, J., Caldarella, P., & Williams, L. (2021). Supporting elementary

school classroom management: An implementation study of the CWFIT program. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, 65(2), 147–157. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1045988X.2021.2013150>

Yeung, A. S., Craven, R. G., Chen, Z., Mooney, M., Tracey, D., Barker, K., Power, A., Dobia, B., Schofield, J., Whitfield, P., & Lewis, T. J. (2016). Positive behavior interventions: The issue of sustainability of positive effects. *Educational Psychology Review*, 28, 145–170. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-015-9305-7>

Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods (5th ed.)*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.

Appendix A: The Project

**Primary School Teachers' Perceptions on the Implementation of  
Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports**

**Designed for:  
Southeastern Primary  
School  
Principal**

**Prepared By:  
Heather Page  
Walden University**

## **Introduction**

This white paper was developed in response to concerns raised by K–3 teachers at a southeastern primary school regarding the inconsistent implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Although PBIS was adopted as part of the school's improvement plan, many teachers reported variations in its use across classrooms, limited support from administrators and peers, and a lack of time and resources to implement PBIS strategies effectively. These challenges have made it difficult to implement PBIS with fidelity and achieve its intended impact on student behavior and instructional time.

The findings from this study were used to develop this white paper to help the principal and leadership team better understand the implementation challenges and make data-based decisions to improve schoolwide PBIS practices (Simonsen & Sugai, 2019). A white paper was chosen as the project format because a few days of professional development alone are insufficient to meet the school's ongoing, systemic needs for consistent PBIS implementation. This white paper aimed to present key findings from interviews with K–3 teachers and offer practical, research-based recommendations grounded in those experiences (Creswell, 2012; Hayes, 2019).

This white paper begins by summarizing the issues that guided the research. It then outlines four key recommendations: enhancing professional development, increasing staff support, standardizing PBIS tools and practices, and improving access to resources. The white paper concludes with guidance the principal may use to strengthen PBIS efforts and move toward a more consistent, collaborative, and sustainable schoolwide approach.

## **The Problem**

The problem at a southeastern primary school was that, despite implementing PBIS, teachers were concerned that the model was ineffective in terms of managing students' disruptive behaviors.

Although the school had implemented PBIS, many teachers still managed disruptive behaviors in their own ways. This lack of consistency was reflected in the PBIS committee's monthly meeting minutes, which indicated discipline referrals continue to come from the classroom.

According to the school's PBIS self-assessment survey report, teachers reported that consequences for problem behaviors were not clearly defined or implemented consistently. Having clear consequences is as important as having clear behavioral expectations. PBIS encourages schools to teach expectations, use positive reinforcement, and apply consistent consequences when needed. Without a consistent approach, it is harder to support student success and more difficult for teachers to manage behavior in ways that keep learning on track.

## **Research Study**

This qualitative study examined teachers' perceptions of implementing PBIS as a model for managing disruptive student behavior. 11 K-3 primary teachers who had been implementing PBIS for 1 year participated in semistructured interviews to discuss their experiences.

The perceptions of primary teachers currently implementing PBIS were analyzed, and open-ended questions based on the PBIS framework and literature review were used to ensure alignment with the research questions. After receiving the principal's approval, participant email addresses were collected using the school's website. Participants consented to participate in the study, and interviews were conducted in person and on Google Meet.

The interview questions were structured to directly relate to the study's objectives and focused on two key research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

RQ1: What do teachers report about the implementation of PBIS in their classrooms?

RQ2: What are teachers' perceptions on what is needed to make PBIS an effective model for managing student behavior in this school?

To analyze the data, open and axial coding methods were used to organize data and identify patterns and themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Data was then divided into parts using open coding, and codes were created. A constant comparative method was used to identify similarities and refine the codes. From this process, 51 initial codes were identified, encompassing themes such as: "rewards decrease behavior issues," "ways to manage behaviors," "training needs," and "more behavior support needed". Axial coding was then used to construct conceptual categories. Nine categories emerged, including: "effective in managing behaviors," "teacher reluctance," "support needed," and "lack of material".

### **Research Findings**

This study examined teachers' perceptions of PBIS's effectiveness in managing student behavior. Through an analysis of 11 interview transcripts, four themes emerged from these categories: teachers reported the current implementation of PBIS was not generally effective, that their use of PBIS to manage behaviors was inconsistent, that there is a need for both individual and schoolwide personal and professional support, and that teachers require time and materials to implement PBIS fully.

The first research question explored teachers' experiences with implementing PBIS in their classrooms. The findings correspond to Themes 1 and 2, indicating that PBIS was ineffective in managing student behavior and aligning teachers' expectations. The application of PBIS strategies varied significantly. Teachers expressed varying opinions on the effectiveness of PBIS, with many raising concerns about its implementation.

**RQ1: What do teachers report about the implementation of PBIS in their classrooms?**

***Theme 1: Teachers Reported the Current Implementation of PBIS Is Not Generally Effective***

Four participants (P3, P4, P7, P11) reported PBIS effectively managed behaviors, with P3 and P7 noting reductions in office referrals and classroom disruptions. For example, P3 observed decreased office referrals as students responded positively to structured support, while P7 highlighted that PBIS helped reduce students' blurting out in class. Additionally, over half of the participants (N = 6) indicated that using reinforcements motivated students to align with classroom expectations. Five participants emphasized the use of positive reinforcement, such as rewards, to effectively encourage behavior change and reduce disruptions. P10 also noted that offering rewards reduced behavior problems and encouraged students to act appropriately, suggesting that structured reinforcement strategies could initially promote better classroom behavior.

Despite these benefits, seven participants (P1, P2, P5, P6, P8, P9, P10) expressed concerns about PBIS, particularly its effectiveness in addressing persistent behavior issues. P5 and P6 noted reinforcements were ineffective for students with frequent behavioral problems, and P10 observed rewards had less influence on students exhibiting continuous disruptive behaviors. P2 acknowledged that while PBIS led to some improvements, it failed to address the root causes of the behaviors. Furthermore, only four participants reported that PBIS affected their classroom management, and some teachers noted that behavior improvements were not sustained once rewards were removed. Eight participants indicated minimal student interest in PBIS incentives, with P4 highlighting difficulties in finding desirable rewards, and 81% (N = 9) observed low student engagement. Although some students initially responded to incentives, three participants emphasized behavior improvements quickly faded once rewards were no longer available. These findings are consistent with previous research by Baule (2020) and Yeung et al. (2016), which found that while PBIS can improve student behavior, it struggles to maintain lasting effects.

### ***Theme 2: Teachers' Use of PBIS to Manage Behaviors Was Inconsistent***

Although PBIS provides structured tools such as behavior matrices, positive reinforcement, explicit teaching of expectations, and behavioral conferences, teachers' implementation varied significantly across classrooms. Based on participants' responses, behavior matrices were identified as vital tools for reinforcing behavioral expectations, fostering consistency, and ensuring fair and equal treatment of students (P1, P2, P5, P6, P10). However, not all participants had access to these tools. "We were told there was a behavior matrix outlining schoolwide expectations, but we never saw it", P5 expressed frustration. The lack of access to standardized PBIS resources led to inconsistent implementation and confusion among teachers.

Participants reported using positive reinforcement (e.g., rewards and praise) to manage student behavior. However, the frequency and consistency of reinforcement strategies varied. Nine participants noted positive reinforcement reduced undesirable behaviors and promoted engagement. Eight participants (71%) reported consistently using rewards to acknowledge students for following expectations. Only 6 participants consistently implemented rewards, while others used them contingently or sporadically. Similarly, six participants incorporated praise as a reinforcement strategy, though opinions on its effectiveness varied. Some teachers preferred public praise (P1, P7, P9) to encourage positive peer influence, while others favored private praise (P4, P10) to meet students' social-emotional needs.

Based on the interview data, nine out of eleven participants indicated teaching behavior expectations, highlighting the first week of school and post-break periods were critical for reinforcing rules. Four participants (P1, P4, P8, P11) emphasized the need for continuous reinforcement throughout the year. Behavioral conferences were also commonly utilized, with eight participants implementing them to address misbehavior. These conferences offered opportunities to identify the root causes of disruptive behaviors and promote student reflection. However, teachers faced challenges in ensuring follow-through after behavioral conferences. P1 mentioned the lack of reinforcement as a significant issue, stating, "Students often revert to old behaviors without consistent follow-up". Some teachers expressed reluctance to implement PBIS strategies, citing lack of buy-in and limited knowledge as key barriers. P9 emphasized that PBIS cannot succeed without full teacher participation. Based on interview data, participants indicated that new teachers struggled with PBIS implementation due to a lack of training and knowledge, noting an ineffective use of using positive reinforcements (P1, P7, P10) while (p1, p10). The lack of standardization in PBIS implementation across classrooms hindered its effectiveness, as some teachers applied the framework inconsistently or not at all. The second research question examined what teachers believe is necessary for PBIS to be an effective model for managing student behavior.

**RQ2: What are teachers' perceptions on what is needed to make PBIS an effective model for managing student behavior in this school?**

### ***Theme 3: Teachers Reported the Need for Individual and Schoolwide Support***

Four out of 11 participants (P4, P7, P8, and P9) emphasized the need for individualized support to address challenges in effectively implementing PBIS. P4 and P9 reported difficulties in implementing PBIS due to their unfamiliarity with the process. At the same time, P7 expressed uncertainty about whether their strategies were consistent with PBIS and whether they needed additional support to ensure their practices met expectations. Furthermore, P8 and P9 noted challenges in teaching behavioral expectations, underscoring the difficulty of implementing PBIS. Additionally, four participants (P1, P6, P10, and P11) highlighted the necessity of mentorship as a form of individualized support. P1 recommended having experienced teachers serve as mentors to assist those less familiar with PBIS implementation. Similarly, P6 expressed a need for support from someone knowledgeable and trained in implementing PBIS correctly and to model how to do it. P10 highlighted the need for ongoing support, noting that considerable time had passed since their initial experience with PBIS implementation, which made it challenging to recall the initial steps.

In addition to individualized support, nine participants (P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P9, P10, and P11) stressed the necessity for schoolwide support to ensure consistent PBIS implementation. Schoolwide support was reported as being crucial for fostering classroom consistency (P6, P9, P11). P11 indicated that the PBIS team should support teachers experiencing implementation challenges by providing ongoing support to resolve common issues. P9 specifically noted the need for regular refresher training, suggesting that training at the beginning of the year and mid-semester would reinforce PBIS expectations and minimize implementation inconsistencies.

P2 emphasized the importance of clear communication, stating inconsistent communication among teachers caused confusion and decreased the success of PBIS. Participants identified two areas in need of support and those lacking support, overwhelmingly expressing two major concerns: missing administrative and parental support. Eight out of 11 participants highlighted the lack of administrative support as a significant barrier to effective implementation. P3 expressed frustration with managing negative behaviors without consistent administrative support, and P8 raised accessibility concerns, noting occasions when administrators were unavailable to address behavioral challenges. P5 explained inconsistent communication from administrators regarding behavior policies created uncertainty among staff, making rule enforcement difficult because "it feels like the rules change daily, which makes enforcing them hard". Participants also emphasized the need for parental involvement. P2 proposed that teachers' jobs would be easier if there were greater parental involvement among students who frequently exhibit disruptive behavior. According to P6, parental involvement was ineffective because parents were not sufficiently involved. P9 noted that while some parents are engaged, many remain unaware of PBIS, which further affects its implementation. Additionally, P5 and P6 expressed frustration with inconsistent parental engagement, particularly for students with ongoing behavioral challenges.

***Theme 4: Teachers Need Time and Materials to Implement PBIS Fully.***

One of the stated aims of PBIS is to promote positive student behaviors, foster equitable learning environments, and effectively address challenging behaviors. However, participants in this study often noted a lack of time and materials posed significant barriers to the successful implementation of PBIS. Time constraints hindered their ability to reward positive behaviors and consistently implement PBIS strategies. Four participants (P3, P4, P8, and P10) struggled to find time to reward students. P4 shared that having enough time to give students points had been challenging, while P3 explained that a lack of time hindered their ability to reward students effectively and address behavioral challenges. P8 noted the difficulty of integrating PBIS into their classroom routine, describing it as challenging on some days when they were caught up with other responsibilities. P10 expressed concerns about insufficient time to reward students, review behavioral data, and implement PBIS strategies amid instructional duties. In addition to the challenges of rewarding students, four participants (P5, P6, P8, and P10) stressed a lack of time to implement PBIS strategies effectively. P6 remarked that teachers do not have enough time to implement PBIS effectively, while P10 reinforced this assertion by highlighting the difficulty of balancing PBIS with teaching duties. Likewise, P8 identified a lack of time as a key factor hindering PBIS implementation while managing multiple priorities.

Six out of 11 participants emphasized the importance of materials as a vital component for successfully implementing PBIS, consistently highlighting the need for behavioral support, reinforcement, intervention, and collaborative resources. P6 noted the challenge of addressing behavioral issues without adequate resources, explaining without the right materials, it feels like teachers are piecing things together. P3 shared this concern, emphasizing the need for more tangible rewards to motivate students effectively, noting that current rewards are insufficient. Likewise, P11 expressed the need for customized materials, emphasizing that the current system does not work for all students and options are needed for those who do not respond to

typical supports. More than half of the participants (N = 6) identified a clear need for materials to support interventions for students with disruptive behaviors. P1 stressed current resources are inadequate for students who need customized materials, and P3 advocated for additional support for students with severe behavioral needs by emphasizing the necessity of specialized resources. In addition to intervention materials, four participants (P6, P8, P9, and P11) identified the need for resources to sustain reward systems, citing their impact on motivation and engagement. P11 stressed the importance of consistent rewards and suggested quarterly incentives to reinforce positive behaviors. P8 described the reward system as time-consuming and difficult to manage consistently due to limited resources and time constraints. At the same time, P6 suggested a wider variety of reward materials could enhance student interest. P9 emphasized inconsistent availability of rewards undermines the system's reliability and fairness, often leading to student disengagement.

#### **Recommendations**

- 1. Strengthen Professional Development and Teacher Training**
- 2. Enhance Administrative and Peer Support Systems**
- 3. Standardize PBIS Tools and Implementation Practices**
- 4. Allocate Adequate Time and Resources for PBIS Implementation**

Based on the study's findings, four key recommendations focus on strengthening professional development, standardizing tools, and practices, enhancing support systems, and allocating necessary resources to improve the implementation and outcomes of PBIS. These recommendations directly address the challenges identified by teachers, ensuring a more consistent and effective approach to managing student behavior.

#### **Strengthen Professional Development and Teacher Training**

While PBIS has been implemented at the school, teachers indicated a need for more training. It is essential for new staff to feel confident and consistent in using PBIS strategies. Several teachers noted that classroom reinforcement strategies are used differently, and some do not feel equipped to apply them effectively. For example, P7 mentioned some teachers fail to use positive reinforcement, while P1 and P10 emphasized how challenging PBIS can be for newer educators.

To support more consistent implementation, the school should build on its existing PD by offering ongoing, structured training throughout the year. Research supports this approach, showing tiered and differentiated PD improved implementation outcomes and teacher buy-in (Bloomfield, Fox, & Leif, 2024). Start-of-year training should be paired with mid-year refreshers and hands-on workshops where teachers can practice using PBIS strategies such as behavior matrices and reinforcement techniques. To address this, the school should enhance its professional development model by providing structured and sustained learning opportunities throughout the year. These should include orientation sessions at the start of the school year, mid-year booster trainings, and targeted workshops focused on practical application, such as building behavior matrices, reinforcing expectations, and handling behavioral conferences. Bloomfield et al. (2024) found that tiered professional development models, especially those

differentiated by staff experience, are more effective at increasing PBIS fidelity. Similarly, Keeton (2017) emphasized the need for follow-up coaching and one-on-one mentoring in schools to support PBIS beyond its initial rollout. These embedded supports ensure that PD is not treated as a one-time event but a continuous process that grows with teachers.

In addition to formal training, integrating peer mentoring and coaching will provide staff with real-time, job-embedded learning opportunities. Pairing newer or less confident teachers with PBIS-trained mentors can help normalize the practice, reduce uncertainty, and build confidence. Edwards (2024) showed that peer mentorship models increased teacher buy-in and improved implementation quality across several schools. Flynn (2022) and Allen (2023) found that peer-led or site-based coaching was more impactful than centralized or infrequent training sessions. These models also support a culture of collaboration where professional growth is shared across the team rather than delegated to a small leadership group.

School leadership also plays a key role in sustaining this work. Millspaugh (2022) observed that site-based coaching, led by principals or instructional leaders, contributed significantly to the long-term fidelity of PBIS practices, especially when those leaders created space for coaching cycles and staff reflection. Wilde (2020) further supported this with evidence that coaching and collaborative monitoring led to stronger Tier 2 outcomes and staff consistency. This type of multi-layered PD, combined with technical training, mentorship, and leadership modeling, provides the structural support needed to build a strong PBIS culture in the building.

By investing in comprehensive, differentiated, and sustained professional learning, supported by mentoring and leadership modeling, the school can promote more consistent PBIS practices, boost staff confidence, and improve student outcomes. Teachers have been clear about what is missing; research offers a clear path forward.

### **Enhance Administrative and Peer Support Systems**

Teachers consistently shared behavior management becomes significantly more challenging when administrative support and expectations are inconsistent. According to P3, managing student disruptive behavior was difficult because leadership follow-up was unclear or delayed. Another participant reported struggling to enforce expectations because they were not consistently communicated across classrooms (P5). Research echoed these concerns, noting that inconsistent leadership support undermines PBIS implementation and causes teacher frustration (Feuerborn, Tyre, & Beaudoin, 2018; Tyre et al., 2020). In a study by Chavis (2020) on administrators' perceptions of PBIS implementation, school leaders acknowledged that inconsistent support often left teachers feeling unsupported in managing behavior.

To better support teachers, administrative teams should take a more active, visible role in implementing behavior systems throughout the year. This includes modeling PBIS-aligned practices during walkthroughs, reviewing behavioral data in team meetings, and consistently reinforcing expectations during staff meetings. When administrators are consistently engaged, staff are more likely to see PBIS as a shared priority rather than a siloed initiative. Allen (2023) emphasized the importance of administrative presence in coaching and training cycles, which made teachers feel validated and more willing to engage with PBIS practices. Similarly,

Millspaugh (2022) found that strong site-based leadership, especially from principals, contributed to greater fidelity in behavioral frameworks such as PBIS and MTSS. Teachers reported greater clarity and less burnout in schools where leaders made themselves available for problem-solving and directly supported interventions.

Beyond visibility, shared decision-making is important for the success of PBIS. Teachers should implement PBIS and participate in its design and refinement. Edwards (2024) reported that when administrators included teachers in ongoing planning through peer mentoring and advisory groups, PBIS was more sustainable. Bloomfield et al. (2024) supported Edward's findings, sharing that leadership fostered stronger buy-in and more responsive implementation systems. For example, teachers should be invited to help shape reinforcement systems, refine intervention protocols, and interpret behavior data together during PLCs. P5's frustration about being told a behavior matrix existed but never seeing it reflected in practice was a communication breakdown. Creating transparent, inclusive structures for resource sharing and decision-making could improve communication.

Peer support was another key area where teachers identified gaps. P2 shared that there was little opportunity to collaborate across classrooms on behavior strategies, which contributed to inconsistent student experiences. Teachers described PBIS as being implemented "room by room," with some using matrices and visual supports, while others relied on personal judgment. This variation diluted the program's effectiveness and increased confusion for students and staff. Intentional peer collaboration is important for promoting consistency and confidence in PBIS (Keeton, 2017; Flynn, 2022). When schools formalize opportunities for teachers to discuss classroom practices, especially within their PLCs, they experience stronger implementation fidelity and fewer behavioral disruptions.

PLCs should include regular, structured discussions on PBIS topics such as positive reinforcement, de-escalation techniques, and restorative conversations. Wilde (2020) emphasized that, by reviewing PBIS data collaboratively, problem-solving became proactive and more tailored to schoolwide goals. These peer-led discussions also provide a platform for troubleshooting, an opportunity many teachers said they wanted but lacked. Schools with teacher-led professional development sessions and peer coaching programs saw measurable improvements in climate, strategy alignment, and application fidelity (Flynn, 2022; Benedetti, 2024).

To support classroom alignment, the school should adopt a standardized PBIS framework that includes a communicated schoolwide behavior matrix, reinforcement menus, and intervention pathways. Teachers expressed frustration about being unsure which tools were available, when, and whether they were being used consistently. P2's and P5's comments suggested a need for materials, visibility, and collective use. Simonsen and Sugai (2019) reported that consistent use across all classrooms, backed by leadership modeling and coaching, had reduced referrals and increased student engagement.

Each classroom should have access to a PBIS toolkit, which includes printed and digital resources such as behavior expectations, examples of daily reinforcement routines, and sample scripts for everyday behavioral situations. PBIS materials could be stored in a shared digital folder and

revisited throughout the year during PLCs. Fox et al. (2021) recommended using shared digital platforms for behavior tracking, enabling teachers and administrators to review progress and adjust plans in real time. Tracking behavior supports early intervention, fosters accountability, and ensures practices remain aligned even as student needs shift.

Ultimately, by increasing leadership involvement, building peer collaboration into routine practice, and ensuring consistency through shared resources, the school can improve PBIS implementation.

### **Standardize PBIS Tools and Implementation Practices**

Teachers consistently reported that PBIS practices varied significantly from classroom to classroom, creating confusion for both students and staff. While some educators regularly used behavior matrices, visual supports, and structured reinforcement systems, others reported never receiving those tools or guidance on their use. P5's frustration was clear: "We were told there was a behavior matrix outlining schoolwide expectations, but we never saw it". P2 echoed similar concerns, highlighting the lack of uniform resources and the resulting inconsistency in how behaviors were reinforced or addressed across classrooms. These gaps point to a deeper systemic issue: without shared tools, language, and expectations, PBIS cannot function as a truly schoolwide model.

Research supports consistently implementing PBIS tools across classrooms as a foundational step toward achieving desired student outcomes. Simonsen and Sugai (2019) asserted that consistency was one of the strongest predictors of PBIS fidelity, and when practices are fragmented, students receive mixed messages about expectations. McIntosh et al. (2024) further reinforced that using clear, visible, and schoolwide PBIS systems led to fewer discipline referrals and stronger student and teacher engagement. These benefits are realized only when PBIS is not left to individual interpretation but is supported by shared tools and a consistent application framework.

To address this, the school could adopt a standardized PBIS framework composed of three essential components: a schoolwide behavior matrix aligned with core values; a clear system for reinforcement, including menus, sample routines, and celebration options; and shared procedures for responding to behavioral concerns, including both corrective and supportive interventions. A PBIS toolkit including these components, along with example scripts, visual cue cards, and classroom-ready templates. Bloomfield et al. (2024) emphasized tiered and differentiated PD was most effective when paired with standardized materials, reducing ambiguity and providing scaffolds for successful implementation.

Multiple studies also stressed the importance of tools that are visible and accessible. According to Keeton (2017), without direct access to a behavior matrix or a reinforcement plan, teachers were left to develop their own systems, which led to confusion and reduced fidelity. Chaves (2020) similarly found that schools with limited tool standardization often experienced inconsistent staff responses to misbehavior, undermining the PBIS framework. In contrast, when coaching supports were tied to shared tools and classroom modeling, teachers felt more confident, and implementation quality improved (Allen, 2023).

Ongoing collaboration around these tools is also essential. Having materials in place is not enough; teachers need opportunities to learn from one another, adapt resources to different grade levels, and collaborate on problem-solving. Schools embedding PBIS into their PLC structures were more likely to sustain implementation because staff had space to refine their use of shared tools (Flynn, 2022). Wilde (2020) emphasized that reviewing behavior data together enabled teams to make proactive adjustments and to build stronger alignment across grade levels and content areas. These collaboration structures must be intentionally scheduled and facilitated, ideally led by a PBIS coach or a leadership team member with direct classroom experience.

Digital infrastructure can also reinforce consistency. Fox et al. (2021) highlighted how shared digital behavior-tracking platforms helped staff log and monitor behavior. They provided administrators with a schoolwide view of trends, enabling them to identify areas of need and celebrate successes. Having a centralized location for PBIS tools and resources will allow new teachers and long-term substitutes to access the resources they need without having to start from nothing. A centralized location would also be helpful in schools with high turnover or mid-year transitions.

In addition, leadership involvement is key to sustaining standardization efforts. Millspaugh (2022) reported that principals and assistant principals were actively involved in reinforcing the use of shared tools, whether through walkthroughs, feedback, or recognition; teachers were more likely to implement them consistently. Tyre et al. (2020) and Feuerborn et al. (2018) documented that inconsistent leadership messaging and a lack of follow-up on behavioral expectations led to teacher skepticism or burnout. By modeling behavior matrices and data-driven conversations, school leaders help set the tone. PBIS is not just a program, but a system for improving school culture.

Finally, sustaining standardization over time requires embedding training and mentoring. Standardized implementation only lasts when it is supported through coaching cycles, mentoring structures, and performance feedback (Benedetti, 2024; Edwards, 2024). These systems ensure tools are distributed and used well and refined when necessary. Pairing standardized materials with embedded adult learning opportunities fosters shared ownership and makes it easier to sustain fidelity even as staffing or student needs shift.

Standardizing PBIS tools does not mean rigid uniformity. It means having a shared foundation from which teachers can adapt and innovate without losing alignment. It means students receive consistent messages, teachers feel supported in their behavior systems, and the school can track and celebrate progress together.

### **Allocate Adequate Resources for PBIS Implementation**

Teachers across grade levels emphasized inconsistent access to materials and reinforcement tools has made it challenging to implement PBIS with fidelity. P6 shared, "Without the right materials, it feels like we are just piecing things together". A sentiment echoed by P4 and P8, who noted preparing PBIS activities or managing reinforcement systems became time-consuming and frustrating without proper support. These challenges reflected a broader issue

found in the literature: schools often overlooked the operational infrastructure needed to sustain PBIS, including access to physical resources, technological tools, and time built into the schedule for meaningful implementation (Feuerborn et al., 2018; Tyre et al., 2020).

According to research, PBIS implementation required more than training to be successful; it relied on adequate tools to make systems visible and usable. Teachers need access to behavior charts, tokens, praise notes, digital tracking systems, and structured guidance on integrating them. When those supports are missing, implementation varies widely between classrooms, and student engagement suffers. In a study conducted by Allen (2023), early childhood teachers were far more confident implementing PBIS when materials were readily available, age-appropriate, and embedded in classroom routines. Similarly, Benedetti (2024) noted visible, well-maintained reinforcement systems played a key role in boosting student responsiveness and teacher motivation.

To allocate adequate implementation resources, every classroom could have a PBIS kit with materials aligned to each grade level. The PBIS kit should include key materials, such as a printed behavior matrix, sample visual routines, positive behavior tickets or tokens, praise note templates, and reinforcement menus. Throughout the year, material should be regularly restocked using a centralized system managed by administration or the PBIS team. As noted in Keeton (2017), the lack of a replenishment process often led teachers to abandon or substitute key elements, reducing program integrity. Chaves (2020) also documented how inconsistent access to resources across classrooms undermined teacher confidence and decreased fidelity in behavior response systems.

In addition to physical materials, digital tools are an essential layer of PBIS infrastructure. Apps and dashboards for behavior tracking, such as ClassDojo, PBIS Rewards, or custom Google Sheets, allow for real-time data collection and help teachers adjust strategies based on trends. According to Fox, Leif, and Moore (2021), the use of digital platforms improved communication between teachers and leadership, thereby increasing early intervention for students exhibiting concerning behavioral patterns. However, these systems were most effective when paired with training. When teachers were explicitly taught how to use behavior data to inform instruction, classroom management improved and behavior referrals decreased (Simonsen et al., 2022; Johnson et al., 2023).

Implementation requires time, not just tools. Teachers cannot be expected to create behavior charts, track student behavior, and restock incentives during their unpaid hours. Millspaugh (2022) highlighted the importance of administrators structuring school schedules to embed PBIS-related planning, materials prep, and team collaboration, rather than leaving them to personal initiative. When these responsibilities are built into job descriptions or supported with planning periods, implementation is more consistent and equitable across classrooms.

Leadership support is also critical in securing and maintaining resources. Edwards (2024) found that schools with peer-administrative mentoring programs were more likely to sustain PBIS over multiple years because they had systems to regularly audit, order, and distribute materials. Administrators who proactively check in on material needs, attend team meetings, and help restock supplies send a clear message: PBIS is not an extra; it is a priority. Flynn (2022) and

Wilde (2020) recommended PBIS resource management be part of ongoing PLC or leadership team agendas to avoid reactive, last-minute problem-solving.

Lastly, resource allocation must be responsive to the different developmental needs across grade levels. What works for a kindergartner may not resonate with a seventh grader. Bloomfield et al. (2024) argued that tiered support systems at both the student and staff levels required differentiated tools and examples. Allen (2023) supported this view, noting that early educators benefited from highly visual, simple routines, while upper grades required tools that supported student autonomy and voice. Providing grade-banded toolkits and reinforcement options allows teachers to customize within a consistent schoolwide framework.

Ultimately, allocating resources to PBIS implementation is not just about materials; it is about removing barriers that keep teachers from doing this work effectively. Teachers are more likely to implement PBIS with fidelity, and students are more likely to respond positively when they have the physical, digital, and structural materials needed.

### **Summary**

This white paper was developed in response to concerns raised by K–3 teachers at a southeastern primary school regarding the inconsistent and often ineffective implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). While PBIS was adopted as part of the school's improvement plan, this qualitative study revealed wide variation in its application across classrooms, limited administrative support, insufficient resources, and insufficient time for full implementation.

The study explored the perceptions of 11 teachers through semistructured interviews, which revealed four main themes: (1) PBIS is not consistently effective across classrooms, (2) teachers implement PBIS strategies inconsistently, (3) teachers need both individualized and schoolwide support, and (4) materials are significant barriers to effective implementation. These findings highlight the gap between the school's adoption of PBIS and its practical application in classrooms.

In response to these findings, four key recommendations were developed: strengthen professional development and training, enhance administrative and peer support, standardize PBIS tools and practices, and allocate adequate resources. These recommendations are designed to improve implementation fidelity, address gaps in support and training, and ensure teachers have the tools and time to apply PBIS consistently and effectively.

This white paper guides the school's leadership team in making informed, research-based decisions to promote a more structured, collaborative, and sustainable PBIS system, empower teachers, and benefit students through consistent behavioral expectations and support.

### **Conclusion**

This white paper highlights the need for a more consistent and effective implementation of PBIS at the southeastern primary school. The findings from this study revealed that the successful

implementation of PBIS at the study school depends on strengthening professional development, enhancing administrative and peer support, standardizing PBIS tools and practices, and allocating adequate resources. Although PBIS has been adopted schoolwide, its effectiveness diminishes when classroom expectations, tools, and strategies vary. Teachers desired more training, precise systems, and stronger collaboration to help PBIS become a more practical and sustainable framework for behavior.

In response to these concerns, four key recommendations were presented: strengthen professional development and teacher training; enhance administrative and peer support; standardize PBIS tools and practices; and allocate adequate resources for consistent use. These steps are designed to address the specific needs raised by teachers and help the school move toward a more unified approach to behavior management.

Using the study findings and recommendations as a guide, school leadership can support teachers in implementing PBIS with greater fidelity and confidence. With proper training, tools, and support, PBIS can become a more meaningful and practical part of the school's culture, leading to improved student behavior, stronger classroom environments, and more time devoted to learning.

## References

- Allen, T. L. (2023). Early childhood teachers' perspectives of being a PBIS coach. (Doctoral Dissertation, Walden University). Walden University Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection. <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations/13744/>
- Barry, S. K. (2015). Team communication networks and PBIS implementation. [PDF]. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/32440391.pdf>
- Baule, S. M. (2020). The impact of positive behavior intervention support (PBIS) on suspensions by race and ethnicity in an urban school district. *AASA Journal of Scholarship & Practice, 16*(4), 45–56.
- Benedetti, M. (2024). The impact of professional development on PBIS fidelity: A mixed-methods study. *Educational Psychology Review, 36*(1), 45–68.
- Bethune, K. S. (2017). Effects of coaching on teachers' implementation of Tier 1 school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports components. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth, 61*(1), 2–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1045988X.2016.1164118>
- Bloomfield, B. S., Fox, R. A., & Leif, E. S. (2024). Multi-tiered systems of educator professional development: A systematic literature review. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 26*(3), 168–188. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10983007231224028>
- Chaves, L. (2020). Secondary school administrators' perceptions regarding PBIS implementation (Master's thesis, California State University). <https://scholarworks.calstate.edu/downloads/jw827h428>
- Childs, K. E., Kincaid, D., George, H. P., & Gage, N. A. (2016). The relationship between

- schoolwide implementation of PBIS and student discipline outcomes. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 18(2), 89–99. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300715590398>
- Edwards, J. (2024). Evaluation of a peer administrative mentoring program to sustain the implementation of positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) (Doctoral dissertation, Alliant International University). ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2881538972>
- Feuerborn, L. L., Tyre, A. D., & Beaudoin, K. (2018). Classified staff perceptions of behavior and discipline: Implications for schoolwide PBIS. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 20(2), 101–112. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300717733975>
- Flynn, S. E. (2022). An examination of peer-led professional development in positive behavioral interventions and supports (Doctoral dissertation, George Fox University). <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/edd/195>
- George, H. P., Cox, K. E., Minch, D., & Sandomierski, T. (2018). District-wide implementation of schoolwide positive behavior interventions and supports. *Journal of Applied School Psychology*, 34(3), 190-221. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15377903.2018.1425790>
- Leach, D., & Helf, S. (2016). Using a hierarchy of supportive consequences to address problem behaviors in the classroom. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 52(1), 29–33. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1053451216630288>
- Lewis, T. J., & Sugai, G. M. (2017). Effective behavior support: A systems approach to proactive schoolwide management. *Focus on Exceptional Children*, 31(6). <https://doi.org/10.17161/foec.v31i6.6767>

- McIntosh, K. (2023). Schoolwide positive behavioural interventions and supports and human rights: transforming our educational systems into levers for social justice. *International Journal of Developmental Disabilities*, 69(1), 5–12.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/20473869.2022.2116223>
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Millspaugh, B. (2022). Implementing universal multi-tiered systems of support for behavior with fidelity: What principals do that makes a difference (Doctoral dissertation). Montgomery County Intermediate Unit. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.28661.59360>
- Strickland-Cohen, M. K., & Simonsen, B. (2022). Function-based support: An overview (ED619345). Center of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports.  
<https://www.pbis.org/resource/function-based-support-an-overview>
- Sugai, G., & Horner, R. H. (2006). A promising approach for expanding and sustaining schoolwide positive behavior support. *School Psychology Review*, 35(2), 245–259.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02796015.2006.12087989>
- Sugai, G., & Horner, R. H. (2020). PBIS implementation: A review of the literature and future directions. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 22(1), 37–51.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0014402919855331>
- Tyre, A., Feuerborn, L., Beaudoin, K., & Bruce, J. (2020). Middle school teachers' concerns for implementing SWPBIS. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 22(2), 93–104.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300719867858>
- Wilde, R. M. (2020). Collaborative monitoring and embedded coaching in Tier 2 PBIS (Doctoral

dissertation, University of Oregon). University of Oregon Scholars' Bank.

<https://hdl.handle.net/1794/25660>

Yeung, A. S., Craven, R. G., Chen, Z., Mooney, M., Tracey, D., Barker, K., Power, A., Dobia, B., Schofield, J., Whitfield, P., & Lewis, T. J. (2016). Positive behavior interventions: The issue of sustainability of positive effects. *Educational Psychology Review*, 28, 145–170. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-015-9305-7>

## Appendix B: Interview Protocol

**Date:****Time:****Phone/Virtual:****Participant Code:*****Introduction:***

*Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in an interview for my study. As I stated earlier, the purpose of my study is to examine teachers' perspectives on the implementation of the PBIS model for behavior modification and their perception of what is needed to improve the application of this program. Today I will be asking you about your experiences, perceptions, and beliefs about the implementation of the PBIS model for behavior modification and what is needed to improve the application of this program. I want to let you know that, before we begin, I have a specific definition of disruptive behavior. This includes any off-task behavior that involves activities not related to learning, as well as behaviors that cause the teacher and classmates to lose focus on the instruction. As you answer my questions today, please keep this definition in mind.*

*I would also like to remind you that I will be audio-recording our interview today, so I will have an accurate record of your responses. I will use the audio recording to create a transcript of your responses.*

*Do you have any questions before we begin?*

**(START RECORDING)*****Introductory Questions:***

*When you consented to participate in this study, you answered some introductory questions. I would like to take just a few minutes to discuss those questions.*

1. *What grade-level do you teach?*
2. *How long have you been teaching?*
3. *How much training have you received on the implementation of PBIS?*
4. *How long have you been implementing PBIS?*

***Transition:***

*My first set of questions relates to the implementation of PBIS and how it does or does not work in your classroom.*

RQ1: What do teachers report about the implementation of PBIS in their classroom?

Interview Questions:

1. Share your experiences with the implementation of PBIS in your classroom.
  - What system of supports were you provided to assist you in the implementation of PBIS? (based on PBIS framework)
  - 's interesting, could you tell me more about?
2. In what ways has PBIS influenced the way you manage your classroom?
  - How do you use positive reinforcements to regularly acknowledge student behaviors? (based on PBIS framework)
  - I am really interested in how you deal with negative behaviors in a positive way? (based on PBIS framework)
3. In your experience, what components of PBIS are effective? (based on literature)
  - 's interesting, could you give me an example?
4. In your experience, what components of PBIS are ineffective? (based on literature)
  - Are there components of PBIS you use more than others?
5. What challenges have you faced when implementing PBIS?
  - 's interesting, could you give me an example?
  - I am really interested in how you handle teaching behavioral expectations to students?
  - How do you manage consistently recognizing students who display appropriate behavioral expectations?

***Transition:***

*My last set of questions relates to your perspectives about what is needed to make PBIS effective in managing student behavior.*

RQ2: What are teachers' perspectives about what is needed to make PBIS an effective model for managing student behavior in this school?

Interview Questions:

1. Tell me about how using PBIS has affected student disruptive behaviors in your classroom.
  - You said.... could you clarify what you mean?
  - I appreciate your answer. I wonder if you have specific examples of \_\_\_\_\_?
2. Describe what you think is needed to help make the use of PBIS effective in managing student behavior in your classroom.

- You shared.....can you tell me more about....
- 3. In my first set of questions, I asked you about the challenges you experienced with using PBIS to manage student disruptive behavior. I'd like you to tell me your thoughts on what you need to address those challenges.
- You shared.....can you tell me more about....
  - Who could provide those resources?
  - What format would you like support (on demand, school-wide, PBL, small group, etc.)

Final Question: Is there anything else you would like to share about the implementation of PBIS or what is needed to make it effective in managing student behavior?

***Closing:***

*I would like to thank you again for agreeing to take the time to participate in my study today. I appreciate you sharing your experiences, perceptions, and beliefs about PBIS with me. When my study has been approved and published, I will email you the link to access it. Thank you again for your time, and I hope you have a great rest of your day, evening, or night.*

Appendix C: Thematic Analysis Table

Research Questions	Themes	Axial Codes	Open Codes (words/phrases)	Examples
RQ1: What do teachers report about the implementation of PBIS in their classroom?	Theme 1: Teachers reported current implementation of PBIS is not generally effective.	Effective in managing behaviors	-office referrals decreased -effective for managing behaviors -helped with classroom management -incentives decrease behavior issues -rewards decrease behavior issues -has affected classroom management	lessened overall because most kids use the positive supports given (P3)  offering rewards encourages students to behave appropriately (P1)
		Not effective in managing behaviors	-office referrals increased -office referrals are not affected -not effective for students with continuous behavior issues -not effective in long-term behavior changes -students continue to misbehave -no intrinsic motivation -no consequences for behaviors -has not affected classroom management	misbehaviors continue no matter how many points are given (P6)  makes kids want to 'do the right thing' for the moment to earn something (P2)
		Student Dissatisfaction	-students not interested in compliments	students do not care about getting rewards so they are not

			-students not interested in incentives -students not interested in PBIS -students not interested in points -students not interested in rewards	motivated to demonstrate positive behaviors (P11)  it is hard to plan events that students want to participate in (P4)
	Theme 2: Teacher use of PBIS to manage behaviors was inconsistent.	Current Implementation Practices	-behavior conference to manage behaviors -behavior matrix to manage behaviors -positive reinforcement to manage behavior -ways to manage behaviors -give compliments to recognize behavior -give praise to recognize behavior -procedure to implement -teaching expectations procedures -procedure for giving points	compliment students (P9)  gives students points based on their behaviors (P1)
		Teacher Reluctance	-lack of teacher buy-in -lack of teacher knowledge	we need complete teacher buy in (P10)  some teachers are not familiar with PBIS (P1)
RQ2: What are teachers' perspectives about what is needed to make PBIS an effective model for managing	Theme 3: Teachers Reported the need for individual and school-wide personal and	Support Needed	-implementation support needed -individual support needed -schoolwide support needed -small group support needed	student leadership team could help with reinforcing expectations (P9)  have teachers who already know how to

student behavior in this school?	professional support.		-support managing behavior needed	implement PBIS help new teachers (P1)
		Missing Support	-lack of admin -lack of parent involvement	difficult to manage negative behaviors because we don't always have admin support (P3)  the parent component of PBIS has not been effective--parents are not as involved (P7)
	Theme 4: Teachers Need Time and Materials to Fully Implement PBIS.	Lack of Time	-lack of time to give points -lack of time to give rewards -lack of time to implement -lack of time to review behavior data	teachers need more time to implement PBIS for it to be effective (P8)  it would be helpful if we were given built-in time to review data (P10)