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A Blended Behavior Management Approach, Student Behavior, and Achievement

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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Gwendolyn Ward

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2016

Abstract

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by

Gwendolyn Ward

MEd, George Mason University, 2010

MA, George Mason University, 2008

BMEd, James Madison University, 1981

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Disruptive classroom behavior has led many schools to implement positive behavioral strategies intended to create orderly learning environments. Despite initiation of such a strategy, an elementary school in the mid-Atlantic region still experienced an increase in office referrals and a decline in student achievement. The purpose of this mixed methods case study was to investigate the connections between a blended behavior program and student behavior and academic achievement, as well as staff perceptions about their experience with the program, and the degree to which the practices were implemented with fidelity. Skinner's behavioral theory served as the theoretical basis for the investigation. Office referrals and standardized math scores of 72 students were analyzed across 3 years, including the year before and the 2 years following the implementation of the blended behavior program, to determine whether significant differences existed within-subjects. Interviews were conducted with 9 teachers, representing kindergarten-6th grade, to explore staff perceptions of the blended behavior program. Quantitative results indicated a reduction in referrals after the 1st year of implementing the blended program and an improvement in math achievement after the 2nd year. While a decline in math scores occurred the 1st year of implementation and an increase the 2nd year, the difference in net performance rendered the results inconclusive to determine the influence of the program on achievement. Qualitative results revealed inconsistencies in the way teachers implemented the program initiatives. This study contributes to positive social change by providing stakeholders a deeper understanding of the blended program and increasing staff capacity to manage challenging behaviors.

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Dedication

This doctoral study is dedicated to my sons, Eric and Jacob, as a testament that with hard work and tenacity, dreams can happen. It is my prayer that you will continue to reach for excellence, and more importantly, seek God's will for your life. Never give up. With God, all things are possible. I love you both! I also want to dedicate this study to my aunt and friend, T. Anne Vest, for always being there to provide the prayer and encouragement I needed to complete the journey.

Acknowledgments

First, all honor and glory belong to the Lord for the completion of this doctoral study. I could not have completed this journey without Him. Also, it would not have been possible without the support of my family, friends, and colleagues. Thank you to my brother, Nathaniel Morris, whose belief in my ability to succeed started me on this path.

I would like to acknowledge my amazing faculty research committee. Because of Dr. Mary Hallums', my committee chair, steadfast commitment to my personal and professional growth and success, I was able to stay the course and finish the race. Thank you to Dr. Steve Wells, my committee member, for providing expert advice, professional judgment, and guidance regarding the methodology. His critical comments, sometimes delivered in a humorous manner sparked my interest in inferential statistics. Thank you also to my university research reviewer, Dr. Anita Dutrow, for her critical feedback that contributed to the successful completion of this study as well.

Lastly, I would like to thank everyone who provided a gentle nudge of support when I felt like giving up. We all share in this victory!

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Introduction

School discipline remains a priority for district leaders and politicians. Legislative demands for school safety and positive behavior have caused educators to become more interested in identifying proactive strategies to provide safe and orderly learning environments (Detrich & Lewis, 2013; Martella et al., 2010). Often, school discipline has been associated with punishment which has not always been effective in bringing about lasting change in behavior (McIntosh, Frank, & Spaulding, 2010) and usually does not provide opportunities to teach and promote desired behavior (McKevitt & Braaksma, 2008). Punishment most often gives attention to the wrong behavior. Parsonson (2012) stated that when teachers rely too heavily on reactive management strategies, such as office discipline referrals (ODRs), resulting in students' removal from class can contribute to the escalation of problematic behavior. Excluding students from the learning environment serves to further increase the discipline issues and learning gaps for students who already underperform academically and who struggle to exhibit on-task behavior (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010). Research has indicated that the use of punitive approaches to change behavior can interrupt instruction, disrupt school climate, and increase the potential for academic failure (Fenning et al., 2012; Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010; Simonsen, Jeffrey-Pearsall, Sugai, & McCurdy, 2012). By comparison, proactive strategies are intended to provide positive behavior supports designed to reduce

student misbehavior, develop the needs and interests of students and teachers, and create optimal learning environments (Marin & Filce, 2013).

Schools in the local district, Pathways County Public Schools (a pseudonym), are required to implement a positive behavior management program (Pathways County Public Schools [PCPS], 2014d). The most widely used research- and evidence-based behavior programs for elementary schools in the district include Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Responsive Classroom® (*RC*). Schools have the option to implement the programs in isolation or as a blended model. Over the years, schools implementing either PBIS or *RC* have experienced success in improving student behavior and academic achievement (Northeast Foundation for Children [NEFC], 2014a; PBIS, 2014). At Wonders Elementary School (WES) (a pseudonym), PBIS was implemented in isolation from 2006 to 2011 (PCPS, 2006; PCPS, 2014c).

PBIS is a multilevel system implemented schoolwide to support the academic and social needs of students (Bui, Quirk, & Almazan, 2010; Detrich & Lewis, 2013; Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports [PBIS], 2014). Interventions are put into place on three levels to address student behavior leading to a positive school climate. The levels differ based on the degree of support. The primary level, or green zone, interventions are designed to meet the needs of about 85% of a school's student population (Bui et al., 2010; PBIS Office of Special Education Programs [OSEP] Technical Assistance Center, 2014a). The expectations and procedures for the primary level are universal and established at the school level for the general population using evidence-based behavioral

management strategies (Bui et al., 2010). The secondary level, or yellow zone, interventions meet the needs of about 10% of the student population by employing targeted classroom and small group interventions such as social skills and anger management (Bui et al., 2010; PBIS OSEP Technical Assistance Center, 2014b). Finally, the tertiary level, or red zone, interventions address the most high risk behaviors of about 5% of the student population (Bui et al., 2010; PBIS OSEP Technical Assistance Center, 2014c). At the tertiary level, the behavior support is intensive and individualized to meet the needs of students with several ODRs or those who display significantly disruptive behaviors (Bui et al., 2010).

RC was developed by classroom teachers for the purpose of supporting the social and emotional learning, as well as the academic growth, of students (McTigue & Rimm-Kaufman, 2010; NEFC, 2014a; Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2014). Guided by a set of principles and classroom practices, *RC* seeks to improve students' prosocial behavior so that they become contributing members of their community. The first *RC* practice implemented at WES was Morning Meeting, followed by Closing Circle, and Teacher Language (NEFC, 2014a). Morning Meeting, as described in *The Morning Meeting Book,* provides the opportunity for teachers to build a sense of classroom community to set students up for success (Kriete & Davis, 2014).

The *RC* approach, as shown in randomized trials, is associated with improving teacher effectiveness, increasing student achievement, and for producing a safer learning environment (McTigue & Rimm-Kaufman, 2010; NEFC, 2014a; Rimm-Kaufman et al.,

2014). PBIS and *RC* both employ proactive, nonpunitive practices that promote positive behavior and discourage negative behavior (NEFC, 2014b). Reinke, Herman, and Stormont (2013) emphasized that implementing proactive behavior practices that support improving social behaviors can deter behavior problems before they arise.

Bridging the gap between research and practice provides a challenge for schools in the local district to implement a viable behavior management program effective in reducing incidences of disruptive behavior. Moreover, the program should be effective in improving teacher classroom management, and promoting academic and social learning for all students. Mixed methods, quantitative and qualitative, were used to investigate WES's blended behavior management program in reducing incidences of students' disruptive behavior and in increasing student achievement.

Definition of the Problem

Excessive behavioral disruptions to classroom instruction and low math achievement are a problem at an elementary school in PCPS. School behavior management programs are designed to curtail student misbehavior by teaching appropriate academic and social behaviors conducive for creating a safe and positive learning environment (Mitchell & Bradshaw, 2013). Despite implementing PBIS for 5 years prior to this study, in the 2011-12 school year, WES experienced a significant increase in the number of students displaying disruptive behaviors in the classroom. The increase in disruptive behaviors resulted in a high rate of office discipline referrals [ODRs] (PCPS, 2014a). ODRs for major and minor offenses are included in this study.

Figure 1 identifies the type of offenses that resulted in the greatest number ODRs and students' exclusion from the classroom setting. Offenses included defiance, disrespect, and disruptive behavior.

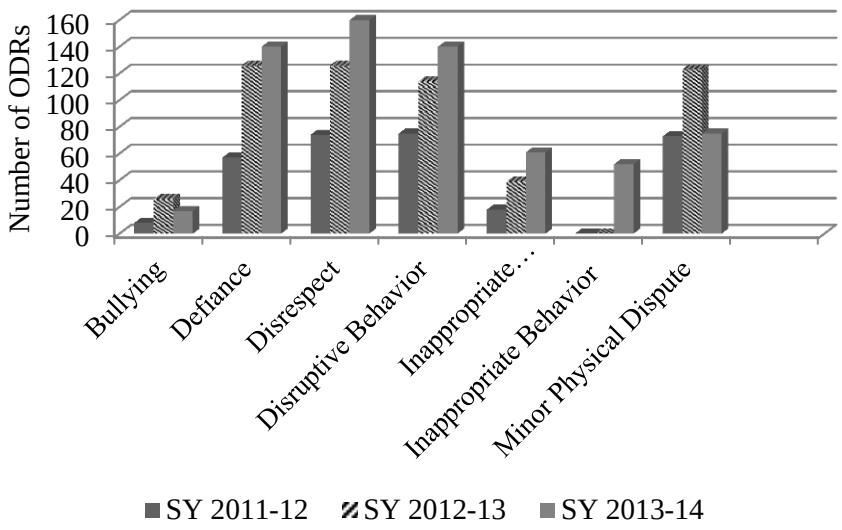

Figure 1. Primary offenses resulting in an office discipline referral. Information developed from the Student Discipline Summary retrieved from http://www.pcps.edu/.

Vincent and Tobin (2011) noted that when a student receives ODRs frequently, it heightens the likelihood that the ODRs would result in the student being suspended from school. According to the school district's student code of conduct, the range of consequences for receiving an ODR for disruptive or off-task behaviors may include verbal reprimand, loss of privileges, parental contact, conference with an administrator, time out in an alternative setting, in-school suspension, or out-of-school suspension (PCPS, 2014d). Students receiving an ODR at the local school are automatically removed from the classroom (Hierarchy of Consequences, 2011). It was alluded to in the research literature that frequent removal from the learning environment increases the potential for

students' academic failure (Algozzine, Wang, & Violette, 2011; Chin, Dowdy, Jimerson, & Rime, 2012; Fallon, O'Keeffe, & Sugai, 2012). Excluding students from the classroom for any substantial period of time is likely to hinder their learning because students would be receiving less teacher supported instruction.

Besides an increase in ODRs, there was a decline in academic achievement. In 2011-12, there was a 21% drop in math achievement as compared to the previous year as evidenced by performance on state standardized tests (X Department of Education [XDOE], 2014b). Also in 2011-12, the school did not meet its Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) in math (XDOE, 2014b). Teachers and parents at WES expressed concerns about the increased number of students who misbehaved in class and the decline in student academic performance (Decision Making Council, 2011). Surveys administered at WES in 2011-12 revealed that students, parents, and other stakeholders' perception of a safe school environment was influenced by the school's ability to manage discipline, maintain order, and challenge students academically (Education Decision Support Library, 2012a; Education Decision Support Library, 2012b). The need for effective and sustainable change to the school's traditional PBIS practices resulted in the implementation of a blended behavior management approach (Decision Making Council, 2011). Positive Behavior Approach was implemented at the beginning of the next school year which was 2012-13 (Wonders Elementary School, 2012).

Positive Behavior Approach (PBA), in this study, is a term used to describe the integration of PBIS and *RC* which grounded in a multitiered framework emphasizes the

use of preventive interventions. At WES, the positive behavior components of PBIS (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2010; Reinke et al., 2013) and the social and emotional learning components of *RC* (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Jones & Bouffard, 2012) were merged to create a schoolwide positive behavior approach aimed at meeting the needs of all students to reduce disruptive behavior, develop a sense of belonging, and create conditions for active and engaged learning (A. B. Jones [pseudonym], personal communication, April 10, 2012). Obtaining staff commitment to PBA can be a challenging endeavor. Shifting from one behavior management approach to another requires full staff support to make substantial changes to classroom and schoolwide practices.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

In the 2011-12 school year, WES faced an increase in incidences of disruptive behavior as evidenced by ODRs (PCPS, 2014a), and declining academic achievement evidenced by performance on the state's standardized tests (XDOE, 2014). In the 2010-11 school year, 104 ODRs were issued to students for displaying disruptive behavior (PCPS, 2014a). In 2011-12 school year, there were 228 ODRs issued for disruptive behaviors, a 119% increase over the previous year (PCPS, 2014a). The local school district charges each school to reduce its office referrals annually by at least 10% (PCPS, 2014b). Rather than meet the goal of reducing referrals, Table 1 reveals that the ODR totals increased each year at the local school from 2011-2014. Specifically, ODRs

increased 50% from school year (SY) 2011-12 to SY 2012-13, and 18% from SY 2012-13 to SY 2013-14. It is important to note that the excessive increase in the number of ODRs could be attributed to increased accountability in recording behavior data.

Table 1

WES 2012-14 Office Discipline Referral Pre- and Post-totals

Data Source	Pre-PBA Baseline 2011-12	Post PBA Year 1 2012-13	Post PBA Year 2 2013-14
Total Number of ODRs	228	343	406
Total K-6 Student Enrollment	665	671	667
Percent of ODRs Compared to Student Enrollment	34.2	51.1	60.8

Note: ODR totals developed from local school positive behavior support team data retrieved from http://wes.pcps.edu/teamshare/pbs. Student enrollment information developed from School Fall Membership retrieved from https://p1pe.doe.state.gov/reportcard/report.
ODR= Office discipline referral; PBA = Positive Behavior Approach;

Likewise, the school experienced a 21% decline on the state math standardized test from a 94% pass rate in 2010-11 to 73% in 2011-12, which was just 3% above the state's 70% mandated pass rate (XDOE, 2014). The school's 2011-12 mathematics achievement was consistent with the national average (Kena et al., 2014). It is important to note that students were assessed on the newly adopted state math standards with increased rigor during SY 2011-12.

The 2011-12 Discipline, Crime, and Violence Annual Report for the mid-Atlantic state where WES is located recorded over 97,000 incidences for disruptive-type behaviors which represented 55.3% of the total 176,000 incidents reported (XDOE,

2012a). Data from the report indicated disruptive behavior is a challenge not just at WES, but also at other schools across the state. The loss of instructional time due to recurring disruptions to instruction negatively impacts student achievement in the classroom, student academic performance on achievement tests, and overall school performance (Bradshaw, Mitchell, & Leaf, 2010; Marin & Filce, 2013; Simonsen et al., 2012).

The 2012 national math results, as reported by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) indicated that only about 40% of fourth graders demonstrated proficiency in math (Kena et al., 2014; Ottmar, Rimm-Kaufman, Berry, & Larsen, 2013). In 2011-12, only 64% of the fourth graders at the local school scored proficient on the state math test which was consistent with the NAEP finding. The 2012 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results showed that among eighth grade students, 35 out of 65 nations and economies that participated in the PISA assessments scored higher than U.S. students in math literacy (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development [OECD], 2013). The PISA results also showed that based on a scale of six proficiency levels, 26% of the U.S. students performed below the Level 2 baseline of math proficiency.

The rationale for researching the local problem was based on studies that recognized a strong connection between behavior and student achievement, emphasizing the benefits of modifying student behavior to minimize interruptions to classroom instruction (Algozzine et al., 2011; Marin & Filce, 2013; Osher et al., 2010; Reinke et al., 2013). Coffey and Horner (2012) acknowledged that the use of evidence-based behavior

management practices with fidelity is essential for addressing student discipline and achievement. “Schools that implement proactive prevention strategies often find that students’ academic performance improves as teachers can focus their attention on academics” (Sinott, 2009, p. 26). WES’ math performance and behavior reports retrieved from public records justifies investigating the connections between the school’s implementation of its blended behavior management program and behavior and academic achievement. Researching this issue can lead to improved outcomes for students at WES, as well as the overall work and learning environment.

Evidence of the Problem from the Larger Community

School behavior is an issue not just to educators, but to society as a whole (Agnich & Miyazaki, 2013; Burdick-Will, 2013; Espelage et al., 2013). While schools in the United States are considered one of the safest places for children, publicized acts of bullying and school violence continue to receive national attention (S. Schoen & A. Schoen, 2010). Different accounts reported by the media are an indication that increased violence in schools has become lethal (Cable News Network, 2012; Columbia Broadcasting Service, 2014; Shoishet, Watts, & Johnston, 2013; Vogel, Horwitz, & Fahrenthold, 2012). The public’s attention to incidences of school violence brings the issue of school safety to the forefront.

In the larger context, producing safe and positive learning environments has been a concern for school districts and policymakers for some time as evidenced in federal legislation in 2004. In 2004, the Reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities

Education Act of 1997 mandated that schools use positive behavior management initiatives to respond to problematic behaviors that hinder a student's learning or interfere with the learning environment of others (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act's amended legislation "identified the need for appropriate training and support associated with proactive behavior management, particularly in relation to students at risk for or identified with disabilities" (Richter, Lewis, & Hargar, 2012, p. 70).

Bushaw and Lopez (2010) reported that the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of Public Attitudes toward U.S. Public Schools indicated school discipline to be one of the main concerns about education. A report from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) indicated that 33% of elementary school teachers and 39% of secondary school teachers in the United States (U.S.) reported that students' disruptive behavior hindered teaching and learning (Robers, Kemp, & Truman, 2013). Nine percent of elementary and secondary teachers reported that the student acts of disrespect toward school staff occurred on a weekly basis (Robers et al., 2013). Teachers from around the world have also reported an increase in classroom disturbances due to student misbehavior which impacts teaching and learning (Agnich & Miyazaki, 2013). Sun and Shek's (2012) research on misbehavior in classrooms in China found that disruptive student behaviors such as excessive talking out of turn, clowning, rudeness to teacher, verbal insults, and defiance has escalated with time. The authors' analysis linked the student misbehavior to a decline in academic achievement and increase in criminal behavior (Sun & Shek,

2012). Improving student academic and behavior outcomes require providing students access to effective proactive practices and interventions (Feuerborn & Tyre, 2012; Guardino & Fullerton, 2010). Managing student behavior will help increase classroom instruction contributing to students' opportunities for success.

The purpose of the study was to investigate the connections between a blended behavior management program, and student behavior and academic achievement, as well as staff perceptions about their experience with implementing the program, and the degree to which the practices were implemented with fidelity. Marin and Filce (2013), professors from the University of Southern Mississippi conducted a similar study. Marin and Filce's study investigated the connection between different types of positive behavior training received by the staff of 96 schools located in the southeastern region. The authors examined the effectiveness of the training and its impact on student performance on state standardized math and language arts assessments. Similarly, the results of this study will contribute to furthering the research of investigating positive behavior, math achievement, and behavior.

Definition of Terms

Definitions are provided to promote clarity and to ensure a common understanding of how the terms were used in context throughout the study (Creswell, 2012). The following terminologies included:

Academic achievement: Refers to the level of student performance on the state standardized math assessment. Scores are calculated on a scale of 0-600 with 400 representing the minimum score needed to meet the state benchmark (XDOE, 2014).

Annual measurable objectives (AMO): Annual goals set by the state to define a minimum proficiency on its reading and mathematics assessments (U.S. Department of Education [ED], 2012).

Behavior management: A form of behavior modification that employs a systematic implementation of school and classroom interventions aimed at preventing, reducing or eliminating misbehavior (Martin & Sass, 2010).

Disruptive behavior: Any action or verbalization that interrupts the flow of instruction by distracting at least one other student in the class (Parker, Nelson, & Burns, 2010).

Implementation fidelity: Implementation fidelity involves determining the degree to which the positive behavioral approach (PBA) program initiatives were implemented, in comparison to as originally designed by program developers (Abry, Rimm-Kaufman, Larsen, & Brewer, 2013; Benner, Beaudoin, Chen, Davis, & Ralston, 2010).

Office discipline referral (ODR): Standardized system used to document and track occurrences of student misbehavior (McIntosh et al., 2010). An ODR is used by teachers to refer a student to an administrator for violating the student code of conduct that result in the student receiving a consequence (PCPS, 2014d).

Physical aggression: An intentional act of physical contact severe enough to cause discomfort; for example, hitting, kicking, pushing, and pulling that led to signs of annoyance or distress in the victim (Parker et al., 2010).

Positive behavior approach (PBA): PBA integrates components of PBIS and *RC* into a blended behavior management program. It offers practical strategies for teaching and reinforcing social-emotional skills to improve student behavior and increase academic achievement (WES, 2014).

Student code of conduct (SCC): Outlines Pathways County School District's discipline policy for students in kindergarten through 12th grade. The manual is published and distributed annually to communicate the district's behavioral expectations to students and parents (PCPS, 2014d).

Verbal aggression: Any comment directed at an individual that was loud enough for the victim to hear, described physical aggression, and was extremely disrespectful or offensive (Parker et al., 2010).

Significance

Disruptive classroom behavior continues to be a concern for schools (Bushaw & Lopez, 2010; Pisacreta, Tincani, Axelrod, & Connell, 2011). WES' discipline referral data indicated an increase in disruptive behavior. The four most frequently reported offenses in SY2013-14 for the region where WES is located were defiance, physical altercations, disrespect, and classroom disruptions (XDOE, 2014a). According to Patton (2011), it is not enough to know that disruptive and off-task behaviors occur; there must

be action. Ensuring the safety and well-being of every student is an important responsibility of school and district leaders (Agnich & Miyazaki, 2013; Cornell & Mayer, 2010; Marin & Filce, 2013; Mitchell & Bradshaw, 2013). Best practices demand that educators understand how to reach all students in order to provide them with the necessary knowledge and skills to be college and career ready (ED, 2014a) and productive members of their community and this global society.

Education reform focuses on improving teaching and learning requiring increased accountability for teachers (Burchinal et al., 2011). Implementing sustainable change to schoolwide initiatives requires the support of stakeholders to restructure current practices (Feuerborn & Chinn, 2012). Implementation of a proactive approach is linked to fewer discipline problems and improved academic performance. Although, students who are punished can be less motivated to change their attitude and complete their classwork. Sklad, Diekstra, Ritter, Ben, and Gravesteijn (2012) found that improving students' social, emotional, and academic skills lessens the probability that students will engage in problem behavior. By controlling behavior problems, the classroom instruction process can be more effective for teachers and students (Sklad et al, 2012).

The research suggests there is a connection between student behavior and achievement. Cornell and Mayer (2010), agreeing with Osher et al. (2010), concluded that disruptive behavior distracts teachers and students, which impedes learning. Promoting an engaging and positive classroom environment is difficult when frequent interruptions and ODRs occur due to students' disruptive behaviors (Dhaem, 2012).

Students in classrooms with frequent disruptive behaviors are less likely to be engaged in academic instruction. Less instruction increases the possibility of students not meeting the state benchmarks on standardized tests (Marin & Filce, 2013; Bradshaw et al., 2010).

Studies advocating a proactive approach to discipline emphasize positive practices for curtailing negative behavior (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Reinke et al., 2013). Supporting students 'social and emotional behavior is essential to achieving academic gains (Cornell & Mayer, 2010). When teachers have access to effective classroom management strategies, it enables them to create productive learning environments that address student social and academic needs.

This study contributes to the current research on the topic by providing data for the local school that was tracked over a 3 year period regarding the association of an existing positive behavior management approach on student behavior and academic achievement. Other schools desiring to strengthen their learning environment by varying their established behavioral practices to reduce the frequency of misbehavior to meet students' academic and functional behavior needs will also benefit from the results of this study. Studying the association between PBA and ODRs and math scores, along with staff perceptions will provide a better, nongeneralizable understanding of the program. Understanding the association will help to determine the value of PBA at the local school which will assist with future decisions on how to best support continued implementation and improvement.

Guiding/Research Questions

Maintaining order in schools is an important focus of education research because of the connections between behavior and student performance (Cornell & Mayer, 2010). Marin and Filce (2013) cited problematic behaviors in the classroom as a factor that could influence student achievement on standardized tests. Students' display of challenging disruptive behaviors usually results in students being removed from the classroom (Gut & McLaughlin, 2012). Students removed regularly from the classroom may have difficulty meeting benchmarks due to missed instruction. Implementing behavior management strategies that reduce incidences of inappropriate behavior, increase time on instruction, and keep students engaged and in class should produce improvements in academic and behavior outcomes.

The research for this study investigated the connections between a blended behavior management program and behavior and academic achievement, as well as staff perceptions about their experience with implementing the program, and the degree to which the practices were implemented with fidelity. Data will be compared over three points in time to determine if there is any difference in students' standardized math scores and the school's ODR totals after implementing PBA at the elementary school study site. Standardized test scores are one measure used by states to gauge school performance. ODR data can be used to detect behavior offenses and can be used to examine the extent of a school's progress in behavioral improvement (McIntosh et al., 2010). The effectiveness of WES's behavior approach was measured by looking for changes in

patterns in student math scores and discipline data, and on staff perceptions of implementation. The research questions align with the purpose of the study which was to investigate the connections between a blended behavior management program, and behavior and academic achievement, and staff perceptions about their experience with implementing the program.

Variables

Variables are any category or attribute that can be measured (Brown, 2010; Creswell, 2012). According to Creswell (2012) and Fan (2010), independent variables can be manipulated, and therefore, affects an outcome. On the other hand, dependent variables, also referred to as outcome variables, are affected by independent variables (Creswell, 2012; Salkind, 2010). In examining the math test scores within-subjects, the independent variable was time and dependent variable was test scores. Also, in examining the office referrals within-subjects, the independent variable was time and dependent variable was ODRs. Null hypothesis testing was conducted on each of the quantitative research questions. For the qualitative phase, staff perceptions about the effectiveness of implementing PBA were investigated.

Quantitative Research Questions and Hypotheses

RQ1: What is the difference in students' standardized math scores across the years prior to implementation, 2011-12, and following implementation, 2012-13 and 2013-14 of the PBA program?

$H_0 1$: There is no statistically significant difference in students' standardized math scores across the years prior to and following implementation of the PBA program, 2011-2014.

$H_a 1$: There is a statistically significant difference in students' standardized math scores across the years prior to and following implementation of the PBA program, 2011-2014.

RQ2: What is the difference in students' number of ODRs across the years prior to implementation, 2011-12, and following implementation, 2012-13 and 2013-14 of the PBA program?

$H_0 2$: There is no statistically significant difference in students' number of ODRs across the years prior to and following implementation of the PBA program, 2011-2014.

$H_a 2$: There is a statistically significant difference in students' number of ODRs across the years prior to and following implementation of the PBA program, 2011-2014.

Qualitative Research Questions

RQ3: What are teachers' perceptions of the PBA program's effectiveness?

Subquestion:

What are teachers' experiences with the PBA program?

Review of the Literature

Professional literature was examined to analyze the connections between disruptive classroom behavior, academic achievement, and positive behavior management programs and practices. Parker et al. (2010) and Sharkey and Fenning

(2012) reported that managing students' disruptive behavior in a positive manner is what contributes to promoting an environment conducive to teaching and learning. Establishing an effective educational environment and managing off-task behaviors can be a challenge for teachers. Peer-reviewed journal articles were examined to study the links between positive behavior and student behavior and academic achievement.

Theoretical Foundation

For this study, aspects of positive behavior management were investigated. Therefore, a theoretical framework was selected that pertained to aspects of behavior modification. When examining the characteristics of positive behavior, researchers have looked to behavioral science; particularly applied behavior analysis which is a recent derivative of behavior modification (Canter, 2010). The behaviorist theory, specifically Skinner's (1953) operant conditioning, provided the theoretical base for school discipline practices. School-based operant conditioning is the process of changing student behavior by manipulating the consequences assigned to the behavior (Martella et al., 2010; Smith & Hains, 2012). Building on Skinner's research, Baer, Wolf, and Risley's (1968) study, published in the first issue of the Journal of Applied Behavioral Analysis, laid the groundwork for the use of applied behavior analysis techniques to improve human behavior.

Most of what is known about behavior management, or behavior modification, has been learned since the WWII postwar era. Skinner (1953) argued that students' behaviors serve a purpose to elicit some type of response from their teacher or peers.

Skinner (1953) postulated that human behavior is learned, can be modified, and that behaviors continue because they are reinforced. Students misbehave to get something positive or avoid something negative. In the literature, the social discipline model of Dreikurs (1968) was used to explain why students are motivated to misbehave: (a) to gain attention from peers or adults, (b) to attain power or control, (c) to get revenge or retaliate, or (d) to avoid failure (Dreikurs, Grunwald, & Pepper, 2013; Teacher Talkers, 2015).

In its simplest terms, operant conditioning seeks to modify overt or observable behaviors. Chin, Dowdy, Jimerson, and Rime (2012), explained that behavior can be changed by applying reinforcements because, whether positive or negative, reinforcements act as motivators. Chin et al.'s belief is rooted in Skinner's (1953) philosophy that students learn from the consequences of their actions. Behaviorist practitioners reward students for exhibiting appropriate behavior and punish students for exhibiting misbehavior (Smith & Hains, 2012). Reinforcement strengthens desired behaviors, whereas punishment weakens problematic behaviors. Appropriate use of reinforcement focuses on the context of the behavior and on teaching the proper social skills (Filter, Tincani, & Fung, 2009). Even though behavior modification programs have been widely used for decades, critics of the technique have argued that the assurance of rewards and the threat of punishment are rarely successful at producing lasting change in behavior.

As a result of his research, Skinner (1953) determined that the use of punishment without other strategies only "suppresses behavior temporarily" (p. 184). Utilizing Skinner's operant conditioning techniques of positive and negative reinforcement or punishment in the classroom allow teachers to shape and maintain preferred behaviors over an extended period (Lineros & Hinojosa, 2012). In contrast to Skinner's operant conditioning, Way (2011) reported that the deterrence theory better supports the use of harsh consequences for controlling student misbehavior to obtain compliance. Deterrence theorists believe that when students are afraid of the punishment it causes them to make better choices about their behavior (Losen, 2011). However, there does not seem to be enough evidence in the literature to support that the fear of stricter consequences will prevent students from misbehaving.

Farmer, Reinke, and Brooks (2014) acknowledged that the principles associated with the behaviorist theory provide the lens from which effective classroom management evolves. Behaviorists contend that behavior is determined by one's environment, and therefore, the teacher should focus on students' observable actions (Skinner, 1953). Sun and Shek (2012) pointed out that to minimize the adverse effects of student misbehavior in the classroom it is important to accurately identify the behaviors being displayed. In accordance with Sun and Shek, Lane et al. (2012) maintained that to change student behavior it is necessary for teachers to be aware of the events preceding the behavior. The authors further claimed that identifying the antecedent stimulus and the consequence can make problematic behaviors somewhat predictable and able to manage (Lane et al.,

2012). In line with the behaviorist theory of behavior modification, PBA utilizes Skinner's principle of reinforcement to teach expected social behaviors (PCPS, 2014d). Langhorne, McGill, and Oliver (2014) maintained that positive behavior interventions based on reinforcement practices have shown successful in reducing problem behaviors. In contrast to the traditional reactive approaches to discipline, PBA shifts the focus to appropriate behaviors (A. B. Jones [pseudonym], personal communication, April 10, 2012). The operant conditioning framework justifies the investigation of the problem of excessive behavioral disruptions to classroom instruction and low math achievement because the theory offers a practical foundation for understanding human behavioral characteristics, and use of rewards and consequences to establish and change student behavior.

Review of the Broader Problem

Literature for the review was obtained by conducting online journal searches through Google Scholar and online education databases available through the Walden University Library. The databases included Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), Education Research Complete, Education from SAGE, and ProQuest Central. In addition, Thoreau was used to conduct a multiple database search. Ulrich's Periodical Directory was used to confirm whether the articles retrieved from the databases were published in peer-reviewed journals. The following Boolean keywords were used to conduct searches on aspects of positive behavior: *classroom behavior, disruptive behavior, disruptive behavior and academic achievement, office discipline referral,*

positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), positive behavior support, responsive classroom approach (RC), school safety, and school violence. Based on the keyword search results, the following themes emerged: educational environment and disruptive behavior, office discipline referral, academic achievement, school discipline practices, and positive behavior research.

Educational environment and disruptive behavior. Since the founding of the public education system in the early 1900s, students have presented behaviors that require a broad range of responses from school staff (Allman & Slate, 2011; Benner et al., 2010). Numerous examples of disruptive behavior can be seen in the professional literature. A few examples are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2

Examples of Disruptive Classroom Behavior from Professional Literature

Types of Disruptive Classroom Behavior	**Citation**
Calling out; interrupting teacher, destroying property	(Allen, 2010)
Physical violence and verbal assaults on peers and adults	(Bausch, 2011)
Speaking without permission, getting out of Seat, noncompliance to teacher directions	(Guardino & Fullerton, 2010)
Verbal aggression, physical aggression	(Parker, Nelson, & Burns, 2010)
Threatening others, physical altercations with peers and teachers, inappropriate comments, disregard for classroom rules and procedures	(Reglin, Akpo-Sanni, and Losike-Sedimo, 2012)
Classroom disruptions, not paying attention, verbal assaults, not following directions, interrupting instruction	(Rusby, Crowley, Sprague, & Biglan, 2011)
Excessive talking, clowning, rudeness to teacher, defiance	(Sun & Shek, 2012)

The display of challenging behaviors can be a hindrance to the social development and educational success of students. Trends in the literature seem to indicate that maintaining an educational environment is necessary to be able to achieve academically (Cornell & Mayer, 2010). The time spent by teachers and administrators with managing student discipline reduces time spent on instruction and fostering positive relationships. Today's classrooms require teachers to educate diverse student populations varying in abilities. Specifically, a study by Johnson, Burke, and Gielen (2011) revealed that to increase student success, schools must understand the influence that the school's social and physical environment has on students' behavioral needs.

The literature addressing the effect of disruptive behavior on the learning environment seems to be consistent in its findings. In Basch's (2011) study, disruptive classroom behavior was expressed as a "significant impediment to teaching and learning" (p. 619). Johnson et al.'s (2011) study revealed that students' display of disruptive and challenging behaviors impact the classroom environment which can influence academic achievement. Gut and McLaughlin (2012) indicated that disruptive behavior not only impacts academic instruction, but can also risk the safety of the learning environment for teachers and students.

Office discipline referral. An ODR is used by teachers to report disturbing occurrences when students break classroom or school codes of conduct. Receiving an ODR usually results in the student's removal from the classroom and receipt of a consequence (McIntosh et al., 2010; Pas, Bradshaw, & Mitchell, 2011). In their study

about ODRs, Pas et al. (2011) acknowledged that the use of an ODR is subjective and varies among schools and classrooms. Similarly, Alter, Walker, and Landers (2013) disputed the value of ODRs for research because of their limited ability to provide an accurate picture of behaviors displayed. The authors argued that ODR data may only capture extreme disruptive behaviors or behaviors that have occurred most frequently to justify an ODR. However, as seen in professional literature, the validity of ODR data has gained in credibility as a key source of information for understanding changes in students' disruptive behavior and as an indicator of the school's behavioral climate (Boneshefski & Runge, 2014). The studies of Boneshefski and Runge (2014), Martella et al. (2010), and Kaufman et al. (2010) noted several uses for ODR data, such as for guiding data-based decision making, measuring school climate, identifying student behavior patterns, monitoring interventions, and evaluating discipline programs.

A component of behavior management is using discipline data for decision-making. Monitoring changes in school discipline is of little importance unless the results provide significant change in student behavior. Kaufman et al. (2010) stated, "Office discipline referral data have important implications for interventions targeting disruptive student behaviors" (p. 45). In PCPS, student discipline data such as ODRs are used to track implementation effectiveness of each school's behavior management initiatives. Using ODRs and other punitive practices to remove students from the classroom raises the risk for school failure (Fallon et al., 2012). Bryan, Day-Vines, Griffin, and Moore-Thomas (2012) found, "repeated referrals can result in missed time from class;

disengagement and alienation from school; negative school climate; academic failure; subsequent school dropout; and, at the extremes, incarceration" (p. 178). Concerns about students' removal from classroom instruction have generated research studies on the effectiveness of punitive disciplinary practices for reducing ODRs and improving academic performance.

Academic achievement. The connection between behavior and academic achievement is not a new concept. The findings of a classic study by Swift and Spivack (1969) pointed out that underperforming students more often displayed inappropriate classroom behaviors. The findings seemed to support the connection between classroom misbehavior and academic achievement. Disruptive classroom behavior is indicative of reduced academic engagement, lower grades, and underperformance on standardized tests (Swift & Spivack, 1969). The OECD (2013) found a connection between higher academic performance and fewer occurrences of student misbehavior. Because achievement is highly related to time engaged with instruction, behaviors that disrupt teaching and learning can have a negative effect on academic outcomes (Brophy, 2010; Simonsen et al., 2014). The association of behavior and academics seemed to be established in the literature, but Algozzine et al. (2011) specifically disputed the existence of a causal relationship.

Attention to achievement in math has increased since the reauthorization of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (Dee & Jacob, 2011). The purpose of the legislation was to create

accountability measures on the state, district, and school level to close the achievement gap (NCLB, 2002). The federal legislation caused schools to consider academic and behavioral outcomes in order to improve the math and reading proficiency of all students (Dee, Jacob, & Schwartz, 2013; Marin & Filce, 2013). Under NCLB (2002), states are required to administer standardized achievement tests annually in math and reading to students in grades 3-8, and at least one time to high school students in grades 10-12. Student achievement on the standardized tests is of great importance, hence the term high stakes testing, because it determines each school's accreditation rating. In some instances, low performing schools that do not meet established AMOs over a specified period may incur sanctions. Dee and Jacob (2011) stated that sanctions may include "public school choice, staff replacement, or restructuring" (p. 420). Marin and Filce (2013) noted that meeting the rigorous academic standards and accountability demands are hindered by disruptive classroom behavior.

School discipline practices. School discipline serves the purpose of maintaining order to create a safe learning environment. The earliest method of public school discipline was in the form of corporal punishment (Forehand & McKinney, 1993). Operating under the common law doctrine of *in loco parentis*, meaning in the place of parents, corporal punishment placed the teacher at the center of discipline (Conte, 2000). Corporal punishment involved the teacher or principal administering physical punishment to students for misbehavior (Conte, 2000). Nineteen states still allow corporal punishment in schools (Center for Effective Discipline, 2015). Public school discipline

practices began shifting from an individual school-based policy to a district-wide centralized system as early as the 1950s (Kafka, 2011).

Traditionally, schools have used reactive consequence based responses to manage student behavior. It was consistently corroborated in the literature that reactive and exclusionary or punitive discipline practices are ineffective when used without a proactive support system that incorporated behavior expectations. Fenning et al. (2012) examined discipline policies of 120 schools. The results of their study indicated that suspensions were the most frequently assigned consequence for both major and minor behavior offenses (Fenning et al., 2012). The use of punitive approaches to behavior can disrupt school climate, interrupt instruction, and increase the potential for academic failure of low performing students (Osher et al., 2010; Simonsen et al., 2012). Punitive discipline practices not only fail to ameliorate negative behaviors, but can sometimes make behaviors worse leading to an increase in problem behaviors teachers were trying to eliminate (Fallon et al., 2012; Reinke et al., 2013; Rusby, Crowley, Sprague, & Biglan, 2011). Evidence indicated that students that displayed the most difficult behaviors are the least likely to respond to reactive type consequences. Furthermore, the intensity and frequency of the disruptive behavior will more than likely get worse. Bear (2012), however, disagreed with critics that dismissed suspensions and other punitive consequences as a viable deterrent for changing student behavior. When administered appropriately, punishment can be an effective deterrent to misbehavior. Allman and Slate (2011) suggested that reactive disciplinary practices have been used for many years to

"reduce misbehavior" and maintain a safe learning environment (p.2). LaVigna and Foreman (2012) also suggested the use of reactive and punitive type practices to control challenging behaviors. There seems to be some disagreement in the literature about punitive disciplinary practices. Some researchers have argued that punitive practices have proven to be ineffective; others posit that punitive practices share the same goals for student behavior as proactive practices. The goal of both discipline practices is to reduce and correct misbehavior.

In accordance with Skinner's (1953) findings, a body of evidence by Fallon et al. (2012), Fenning et al. (2012), and Feuerborn and Tyre (2012) acknowledged that punishment by itself does not lead to long-lasting change. Mitchell and Bradshaw (2013) stated, "Exclusionary discipline strategies only temporarily reduce problem behaviors and do not fully alleviate them or prevent the onset of other behavior problems" (p. 600). Studies by Osher et al. (2010), Reinke et al. (2013), and D. Stone, J. Stone, and L. Stone (2011) lend credibility to Mitchell and Bradshaw's findings by emphasizing the negative implications that punitive practices such as detention, out-of-school suspensions, and expulsions can have on student performance. Osher et al. (2010) stated, "School discipline entails more than just punishment" (p. 48). Effective discipline should result in students assuming greater responsibility for their actions to reduce the likelihood of problematic behaviors reoccurring. However, in some cases, using punitive and exclusionary practices may increase the frequency of the undesirable behavior and the probability that the behavior will continue. The literature seems to support the

implementation of preventive practices, such as PBIS and *RC* over traditional punishment for achieving positive academic and social outcomes when managing student behavior.

Positive behavior research. Positive behavior research emerged in the late 1980s through a grant established to identify schoolwide behavioral strategies to meet the needs of students with behavior and developmental disorders. For over two decades, positive behavior programs have been recognized for providing effective evidence-based strategies to reduce disruptive and violent behaviors for all students (Mitchell & Bradshaw, 2013). Stage and Quiroz's (1997) conducted a meta-analysis of 99 school interventions targeting disruptive student behavior. The researchers, among other interventions, cited positive behavioral interventions as having "strong effects" on managing problematic behaviors in the classrooms. McIntosh et al. (2010) and Osher et al. (2010) found the use of proactive strategies effective for managing low-level disruptive behaviors, along with more serious levels of defiant behaviors. The findings mentioned above corroborated the findings of Parker et al. (2010). From their research where factors affecting behavior were studied, Parker at al. found that in classrooms where positive interventions were used, there appeared to be a significant reduction in classroom disruptions. Research conducted over the past twenty years has shown that schools consistently implementing positive behavior interventions have been able to reduce ODRs by 20-60% and improve academic performance (McIntosh et al., 2010).

The two positive behavior programs that are the focus of this study are PBIS and *RC*. The most widely used positive behavior program, PBIS, is a three-tiered framework

used to implement proactive, rather than reactive interventions by establishing schoolwide expectations to foster a positive school climate and improve student performance (Bui et al., 2010; Detrich & Lewis, 2013; PBIS, 2014). Tillery, Varjas, Meyers, and Smith-Collins (2010) mentioned that PBIS' multitiered system allows preventive measures to be used so students can receive the appropriate intervention before behaviors escalate to a crisis state.

PBIS is guided by seven key features (PBIS, 2014)

1. Administrative leadership
2. Team-based implementation
3. Clearly defined positive expectations
4. Expected behaviors taught explicitly
5. Acknowledgement/Rewards system
6. Monitoring of behaviors
7. Data-based decision-making

The PBIS philosophy emphasizes that student behavior can be modified if a connection between behavior and consequences can be established (Filter et al., 2009; Horner, Sugai, & Anderson, 2010). The statement mentioned above provides some evidence that PBIS is embedded in the behavioral sciences.

RC is recognized as a teaching approach guided by seven principles that combine academic and social-emotional learning to meet students' needs. The principles that guide *RC* are as follows (NEFC, 2014a):

- Philosophy based on social and emotional curriculum

- How children learn is important
- Cognitive growth occurs through social interaction.
- Expectations and social skills taught
- Foster positive relationships
- Connect with families
- Teamwork

RC is intended to create a classroom environment where teachers and students feel valued (NEFC, 2014a; Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2014). According to Wanless, Patton, Rimm-Kaufman, and Deustch (2013), the *RC* approach aims to "foster safe, challenging, and joyful classrooms and schools by bringing social-emotional and academic learning together" (p. 42). Social-emotional learning is the basis for students' positive behavior in school. Rimm-Kaufman et al.'s (2014) randomized study with 24 schools examined the impact of the *RC* approach on students' social skills, and reading and math achievement. Rimm-Kaufman et al. found that implementing the *RC* approach was associated with improved student academic achievement, as well as better quality in math instruction. The authors also found that teacher-student interactions improved. The results of Rimm-Kaufman et al.'s study appeared to indicate that implementing *RC* interventions to reduce disruptive classroom behavior generated results similar to a study conducted by Bradshaw et al. (2010) with PBIS. Both studies indicated success in their findings for reducing ODRs, disruptive classroom behavior, and for improving student social-emotional skills.

Historically, studies have been conducted on PBIS and *RC* separately rather than on a blended model, such as PBA. Fenning et al. (2012) indicated that it is becoming more acceptable to combine components of different behavior approaches to address diverse behavior needs rather than identifying with just one. No research studies were found that addressed the combined implementation of PBIS and *RC* and thereby supporting the efficacy of the approach. However, evidence was presented in white papers that demonstrated the two models share similar philosophies and can be integrated into a blended model (NEFC, 2014a; PBIS, 2014).

PBA involves setting rules and expectations, teaching acceptable social behaviors, and establishing a reward structure to reinforce desired behaviors (Reinke et al., 2013). If students are in need of more intensive supports, then they receive interventions in the form of a group (Tier 2) or through a specific plan that addresses their unique needs (Tier 3). Integrating components of PBIS and *RC* into a positive behavior approach allowed WES to draw from the strengths of both models to meet the diverse needs of its students, staff, and school community.

Implications

Students present behaviors that require a broad continuum of responses from school staff to address the behavioral needs. A review of the literature revealed evidence that supports positive and preventive behavior management to be an effective instructional strategy (Bradshaw et al., 2010). Implementing proactive initiatives, such as establishing and teaching expectations, using positive reinforcement to acknowledge

appropriate behaviors and avoiding punitive methods to manage student behavior has proven to be successful in maintaining classroom discipline and reducing occurrences of misbehavior (Sadruddin, 2012).

This focus of the study was staff perceptions, as well as the quantitative links of a blended positive behavior management approach and math achievement and the number of incidences of disruptive behavior. Caples and McNeese (2010) acknowledged that teachers consider student misbehavior a major concern that impacts their professional decisions. Reducing disruptive behavior should yield achievement gains and improve teacher efficacy. After reviewing the literature, the project genre that would likely result from this study was professional development. Successful implementation, innovation, and sustainability of the program initiatives are dependent upon building internal capacity (Blank, 2013; Coffey & Horner, 2012). Lewis, Barrett, Sugai, and Horner (2010) acknowledged that providing professional development training that meets school needs is necessary for building capacity within school behavior leadership teams to ensure procedures are in place to implement effective behavior management practices.

The findings informed the project by bringing awareness to the effectiveness of the local school's implementation of its blended behavior management approach, as well as solicited recommendations for professional development opportunities to improve classroom management and student outcomes. Improving the school's ability to provide positive behavior support for students and teachers may contribute to developing a positive school climate. Changing the learning environment adds to the possibility of

increasing the future prospects of the quality of life for all students; also to improving teacher job satisfaction and self-efficacy which could prevent teachers from leaving the profession early.

Summary

The focus of Section 1 was to define the local problem which is increased classroom disruptive behavior and its connection to academic achievement. It was determined that disruptive behavior continues to be a concern in U.S. schools, as well as globally. Educators are spending increasingly more time on managing discipline and redirecting disruptive behavior than on academic instruction. Students learn in environments where they feel safe. Schools should establish a learning environment where students are developed intellectually, nurtured socially and emotionally, and engaged academically. Schools are required to implement evidence-based practices to comply with federal legislation. Effective proactive and preventative methods are needed for responding to student misbehavior. The literature surrounding behavior management seemed to point to the implementation of positive behavior management programs as a viable strategy for addressing problematic behaviors. Research questions and hypotheses were developed to align with the problem.

WES experienced an increase in ODRs and a decline in students' standardized math achievement. Research evidences a connection between student behavior and academic achievement. Placing an emphasis on minimizing or preventing classroom disruptions may contribute to creating a safe and orderly learning environment. The focus

of Section 2 defines the quantitative and qualitative research procedures that were used to address the research problem.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

The research literature provided evidence that disruptive behavior can have a lasting effect on students and teachers. Osher et al. (2010) found that when schools fail to address minor behaviors it can lead to poor academic outcomes. Teachers have the task of preparing students to become knowledgeable and productive citizens by using effective discipline practices to shape student behavior, encourage socially appropriate behaviors, and improve the learning environment (Mitchell & Bradshaw, 2013).

Through the use of a sequential explanatory mixed methods case study, quantitative and qualitative data were used to investigate the quantitative connections between a blended behavior management program and incidences of disruptive behavior and math achievement, as well as staff perceptions about their experience with implementing the program and the degree to which the practices were implemented with fidelity. Yin (2014) reported that a case study is an appropriate research design for problem-based research. The methodology described in this section includes the research design, setting, sampling strategies, data collection, and data analysis procedures and results.

Mixed Method Design and Approach

Mixed methods research has been recognized as an emerging methodological choice (Castro, Kellison, Boyd, & Kopak, 2010; Torrance, 2012). Caruth (2013) made reference to how the mixed methods study likely evolved to counterbalance the

respective weaknesses associated with quantitative and qualitative designs when used separately. Methodologists recognize mixed methods research as the process of using multiple methods in a single study. Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner (2007) sought to analyze the opinion of 19 research methodologists to develop a general definition of mixed methods research. The authors' results revealed that diverse views on the meaning existed among professionals in the field. Johnson et al.'s (2007) definition that emerged from the data is as follows:

> Mixed methods research is the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration. (p. 123)

Mixed methods researchers collect, analyze, and mix both quantitative and qualitative methods to obtain a better understanding of the research phenomena (Creswell, 2012; Denzin, 2012; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2012). The six types of mixed methods strategies most often used consist of three sequential and three concurrent designs (Creswell, 2014; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2012). Creswell (2014) stated that three elements influenced the procedures used for a mixed methods study. The elements include (a) timing of the quantitative and qualitative data collection (sequential or concurrent), (b) weighting to determine whether priority will be given to the quantitative or qualitative data or if the data will receive equal weight, and (c) mixing which

determines where the merging of both types of data will occur (Creswell, 2014; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2012). A mixed methods case study design was utilized to investigate the staff perceptions about, as well as connections between, a blended behavior management approach and behavior and academic achievement. Case study research is described as inquiry to discover meaning and gain an in-depth understanding of an issue through a bounded system (Yin, 2014). Putney (2010) considered case study a versatile approach to research because quantitative and qualitative data could be used in the study (p. 118). The mixed methods case study is appropriate for the purpose of this study because the investigation involved a two-fold inquiry into the implementation of a behavior management program at a single school. The intent of this in-depth case study was to understand the statistical connections between PBA and behavior and achievement, as well as explore staff members' perceptions of how PBA was implemented.

Quantitative Components (Statistical)

An inferential design with an *ex-post facto* approach was utilized for the quantitative research. An inferential *ex-post facto* approach is a nonexperimental design that examines how an independent variable, present prior to the study, influences a dependent variable (Silva, 2010). The *ex-post facto* approach was used to compare matched subjects at three time periods to determine whether or not statistically significant differences existed between the groups when measuring the dependent variables. For the purpose of this study, the phenomenon was PBA. Given (2007) stated that "in quantitative research, inferential research methods consider the functional relationships

between variables, hypothesis testing, and the development of generalizations across populations" (p. 251). In this study, the quantitative portion consisted of an analysis of pre- and post PBA standardized math scores and pre- and post- PBA ODRs across 3years in order to determine if a statistically significant difference existed within-subjects math scores and within-subjects ODRs.

Qualitative Components (Textural)

The qualitative data were collected from interviews to explore staff perceptions about the effectiveness of PBA on the outcome variables. Interviews are considered valid methods to assess the implementation of organizational interventions (Cohen, et al., 2007). Themes that emerged from the interviews were used to triangulate the data from the quantitative inquiry in order to better address the purpose of the study and research questions (Creswell, 2012; Greene, 2014; Yin, 2014). The interview data provided an in-depth understanding of the blended approach by exploring staff perceptions about the successes and challenges encountered during implementation.

Utilizing a sequential explanatory mixed methods design, I was able to build on the strengths of each of the quantitative and qualitative design types, which offset the weaknesses associated with each approach (Caruth, 2013; Creswell, 2012). Relying solely on qualitative data for this study would not have provided the inferential statistical data needed to address the quantitative research questions and hypotheses. A single quantitative research design could have been used to investigate the research questions about the math test scores and ODRs; however, the numerical data alone would not

provide the depth of inquiry needed to understand staff perceptions of the effectiveness of implementing PBA. Torrance (2012) explained that the core rationale for conducting a mixed methods study is the ability to triangulate the data. Having the ability to combine both quantitative and qualitative procedures allowed the research problem to be adequately addressed (Johnson et al., 2007; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2012).

Castro et al. (2010) noted that the sequential explanatory strategy is characterized as a two phase approach to data collection and analysis. The strategy involved the collection and analysis of quantitative (numeric) data followed by collection and analysis of qualitative (text) data that were conducted in two consecutive phases (Creswell, 2014; Feilzer, 2010). Priority was given to the quantitative data to identify statistically significant differences in behavior and academics of the groups. Mixing of data occurred at the intermediate stage when developing the research questions and also at the integration stage when the qualitative interview data were used to inform the quantitative statistical results. My goal was not just to use each method effectively when separate, but also to mix the methods effectively.

Setting and Sample

Setting

WES, the site selected for this study is a suburban public school in a mid-Atlantic school district. The school serves a diverse kindergarten to sixth grade (K-6) population with an enrollment of almost 700 students (PCPS, 2014c). The school's ethnicity consists of approximately 69% Black, Hispanic, and Asian students and 30% White students

(PCPS, 2014c). Thirty-four percent of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch (PCPS, 2014c). Twenty percent of the student population receives special education services (PCPS, 2014c).

The study period was from Fall 2011 to Spring 2014. The school is a public institution which indicated students' school designations were primarily based on district boundaries. Being subject to the school district's enrollment procedures clarified how students became enrolled at the schools. The students were exposed to the PBIS behavior management program at least during the first year of this study, 2011-12, prior to the school restructuring its practices in 2012-13 to implementing a blended model, PBA. PBA was implemented schoolwide during the second and third year of this study. The target population consisted of all K-6 students at the study site (N=600+). The students representative of the population of interest for this research were the fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students enrolled at WES during the study. Choosing WES as the study site provided access to the appropriate population needed to investigate the quantitative research questions statistically.

Sampling Strategies

A mixed method sampling strategy was used within this study. According to Sharp et al. (2012) mixed methods sampling strategies are generated from creatively combining probability or nonprobability sampling and purposeful sampling techniques in a single study. The use of a mixed methods sampling strategy contributes to the credibility of the findings. In this study, nonprobability sampling was used.

Nonprobability sampling, a strategy that consists of selecting participants based on availability, convenience, and similar characteristics (Mammen & Sano, 2012) increase the external validity of the study. The aim of nonprobability sampling is for the selection of participants to be nonrandom meaning the selection of participants is dependent on the judgement of the researcher. Similar to nonprobability sampling, purposeful sampling is a technique that allows researchers to intentionally select individuals or sites to understand the central phenomenon (Suri, 2011). Sharp et al. pointed out that some methodologists consider selecting participants the most important aspect of mixed methods research. Mixed methods sampling designs can use concurrent or sequential techniques that allow researchers to select participants who are most likely able to answer the research questions. Sequential sampling was used in this study. Utilizing sequential sampling, I was able to select the appropriate sample size for each phase: a large sample for the quantitative phase (n=72) that leads to greater breadth of information and a small sample for the qualitative phase (n=9) that leads to greater depth of information.

Quantitative phase. Convenience sampling was utilized to address the two quantitative research questions since the research focused on a single site. Drawing a convenience sample, a subset of the population, involved selecting participants from preexisting groups who were available and easily accessible and who met the study criteria (Creswell, 2012; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2010). The sampling frame consisted of fourth grade students from SY 2011-12, fifth grade students from SY 2012-13, and sixth grade students from SY 2013-14, (N=296). The sample was drawn from the fourth, fifth,

and sixth grade students who were continuously enrolled at WES during the study's 3 year period, 2011 through 2014. In SY 2011-12, PBIS was being implemented at WES while the students were in the fourth grade. In SY 2012-13 and SY 2013-14, PBA was being implemented at the school. Moreover, all participants were administered the state math test for the 3 consecutive years of the study. The size of the identified student subsample was n=72.

Qualitative phase. A purposeful sampling strategy was employed for the qualitative portion of the study to select participants for the in-depth interviews. Purposeful sampling provided the researcher a range of options in selecting a sample that best aligned with the study (Koerber & McMichael, 2008). Homogeneous sampling was used because the qualitative research questions being addressed were specific to the characteristics of the subgroup being invited to participate in the interviews (Creswell, 2012; Glesne 2011). Koerber and McMichael (2008) considered familiarity of the researcher with the study site advantageous:

> The close relationship between researcher and research site that makes the sample suitable often grants the researcher a level of access to and familiarity with the sample that guarantees a richness of data that could not be attained if the sample were less familiar to the researcher. (p. 463)

Having prior knowledge of the group being researched provides a greater level of understanding about the group that would take an outsider time to acquire (Unluer, 2012).

The eligibility criteria for the qualitative portion of this research study consisted of WES' instructional staff: teachers, instructional assistants, and specialists. The sampling frame comprised K-6 teachers and key specialists, (N=35). While it was not feasible to interview all available participants, the intent of utilizing homogeneous sampling was to achieve representativeness. Ideally, the in-depth interviews would have an equal representation of primary teachers, kindergarten to second grade (K-2), upper grade teachers, third to sixth grade (3-6), and instructional specialist staff members.

Utilizing a purposeful selected group was more likely to yield a wider spectrum of staff perceptions about the implementation of PBA and its connections to behavior and academic achievement. Teachers and specialists possessing knowledge of the school's behavioral management practices were recruited for the interviews. Eligibility for participation was based on years of service. Participants were selected who had been employed continuously at the school since SY 2010-2011 through 2013-2014. The 2010-11 and 2011-2012 school years represented the 2 years prior to the school integrating components of PBIS and *RC* into the current blended PBA model that is the topic of this study. Mason's (2010) study indicated that for studies with a high level of homogeneity as with WES' teacher and specialist population, saturation could be reached in as few as six interviews. Utilizing a small number of participants allowed the research topic to be explored in depth (Creswell, 2012). The size of the identified subsample was n=9.

Role of the Researcher

Researcher-participant relationships are a consideration especially in qualitative research due to the kinds of self-reporting information being disclosed. Glesne (2011) and Hedges (2010) pointed out that the teacher-researchers have a dual role as researcher and professional learner. For this study, I hold a dual role as researcher and teacher practitioner. I have been employed as a teacher at the study site for over 15 years and have been able to establish a positive working relationship with many of the staff members. Over the years, I have been a member of the school's Positive Behavior Support team and have served in the position of Positive Behavior Support co-coach. The Positive Behavior Support coach position had no authoritative responsibilities over any members of the staff; however, I gained considerable knowledge about various aspects of positive behavior models. Due to my association with the school's behavioral management program as an insider, assumptions may exist related to the school's previous programs and current implementation of PBA.

Potential sources of response and reporting biases were minimized by utilizing a mixed methods design to research staff perceptions of the effectiveness of implementation of PBA. The roles of nonparticipant observer and notetaker were maintained which contributed to minimizing response bias. Triangulation of the archival and interview data added to minimizing reporting bias (Greene, 2014; Yin, 2014). Selection bias, often related to the use of a convenient or homogeneous sample, was

addressed by the use of specific eligibility criteria for participation in the study. Also, an online selection process was used to recruit interview participants.

Regarding participants, the elementary students' identities were unknown for the archival records data. For the interviews, teachers and specialists were invited to participate voluntarily in the study which required informed consent. As a member of the staff, I did not hold any supervisory responsibilities over any of the participants so no power gap existed. No coercion or undue influence occurred in selecting interview participants and no incentives or compensation was offered to anyone for participation in the study. However, the potential for ethical challenges arises from the possible conflicts of interest generated by professional and personal standing at the school. Greene (2014) stated that the researcher role gives legitimacy to the credibility of the study. To maintain the integrity of my dual role, safeguards were put into place to uphold my position as an ethical researcher. Close attention was given to the guidelines and requirements involving research with human subjects.

Protection of Participants' Rights

The Belmont Report (1979), which lays the foundation for the Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocols, describes the three basic principles involving research with human subjects: *respect for persons, beneficence,* and *justice* (HHS, n.d). Permission to conduct the study was sought from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the local school district. Proper steps were taken to follow university and district procedures for gaining access to the school site, participants, and

data. A letter of cooperation was received from an official at the study site that provided support for gathering archival data, access to staff to recruit ten interview participants, and permission to use school facilities for interviews. Permission was obtained from the Walden IRB (Approval number 02-26-15-0319849) and from the school district to conduct the study, to use de-identified archival student records from 2011-12, 2012-13, and 2013-14 school years for research purposes, as well as utilize individual interviews to collect qualitative data.

Three years of students' standardized math test scores and discipline data were gathered for the research. Accessing the de-identified archival data did not require interaction between the researcher and participants, so informed consent was not required. Use of the de-identified data maintained anonymity of students' identity. The detached nature of the quantitative portion of the study had the possibility of creating only minimal risk.

Interview participants were recruited through email. A flyer was emailed to all K-6 instructional and specialist staff members to announce the study and search for interview participants (N=35). Following the flyer, an email was sent to the same group with information about recruitment and to share the consent form. To ensure potential participants did not feel coerced, I purposely waited several days between the flyer and the recruitment email message. The interview informed consent described the specifics of the study and any risks and benefits that participants might be exposed to during the study. Participants were instructed to return the consent form electronically. Of the 35

staff members emailed, 14 replied to the message, which constituted a response rate of 40%. A follow-up email was sent individually to the 14 potential participants to address questions posed about the research study and to clarify the eligibility criteria for participation. This ensured that participants would likely follow through with their informed decision to participate. Of the 14 potential participants, only 10 met the eligibility requirement. From the 10 participants, 9 were interviewed (25.7%). The identified subsample was $n = 9$. Informed consent was obtained from each interview participant. Information about the study was provided to participants on a continual basis as the situation required ensuring participants were able to distinguish between my researcher role and my professional and personal roles. Steps were taken to ensure confidentiality of the data and privacy and anonymity of the participants through an encrypted system only known to the researcher. All quantitative and qualitative data were de-identified by assigning a number to each participant that was used throughout the study. Codes were assigned to all hard copy and computerized records (Creswell, 2012; Yin, 2011).

Data Collection

The data collection for this mixed methods case study drew from multiple sources such as, archival records and interviews. Collecting multiple types of data will assist in providing an in-depth picture of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). A mixed methods sequential strategy was used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. In a sequential strategy, quantitative data are collected first followed by qualitative. The

qualitative results were used to interpret the quantitative results (Caruth, 2013; Creswell, 2012). IRB and school district approval were obtained prior to data collection.

Quantitative Component

For the quantitative portion, archival data collected and maintained by the school district for the purpose of student records was gathered for the research. The SY 2011-12 math test scores and number of ODRs served as the baseline measurement. The baseline data represented behavior outcomes and student achievement prior to the implementation of PBA at the local school. Matched math scores and the number of ODRs at point 2, SY 2012-13 and point 3, SY 2013-14 were examined to determine if statistically significant differences occurred across the years.

Quantitative data were gathered in two phases that consisted of standardized math test scores and school discipline data in the form of ODRs across the 3 year period of the study. These data, with permission from the IRB, school district, and research site, were gathered from the PCPS student information system (SIS). SIS is the school district's web-based administrative data system where information for student records is stored. Student records can only be accessed by authorized employees through the district's intranet. Data were gathered from the SIS on the sample students. The test scores and ODR data were beneficial for investigating the quantitative links between a blended behavior management approach and math achievement and incidences of disruptive behavior.

Data collection instrument for phase one. The data collection instrument that was used for the first quantitative phase was the Standards of Learning (SOL) Math achievement test for Grades 4-6. The SOL tests were first created, and approved for use by the Board of Education in 1995. The tests are standards-based, which means they measure specific content knowledge and skills of the established state curriculum. The standardized math tests are administered in the spring semester of each school year. Test results are not intended to be representative of students' total academic ability (XDOE, 2012).

The SOL math test is a criterion-referenced test that measures student achievement against the predetermined state math standards of learning benchmarks. Test development is ongoing and continuous through a collaborative effort with the Educational Testing Service (ETS), content specialists, state educators, Pearson, the Board of Education, and a private consulting firm (XDOE, 2012). The 50 item math SOL test measures content knowledge based on four strands, *Number and Number Sense*, *Computation and Estimation*, *Measurement and Geometry*, *Probability and Statistics*, and *Patterns, Functions, and Algebra* at each grade level as outlined in the curriculum framework (XDOE, 2012d).

The State Board of Education, with the assistance of Pearson psychometricians, determines the SOL test achievement levels, with student achievement calculated on a scale of 0-600. Students are rated at one of the three proficiency levels: Fail/Basic (0-399), Pass/Proficient (400-499), and Pass/Advanced (500-600). Six hundred represents a

perfect score. A cut score of 400 or 70% represents the minimum pass requirement and 500 or higher, or 88% the Advanced level (XDOE, 2012c). The data in Table 3 indicates that to achieve a performance level of at least pass/proficient on the SOL math test, students in grades 4 and 5 must answer correctly a minimum of 31 out of 50 assessment items. Students in grade 6 must answer correctly a minimum of 28 out of 50 items.

Table 3

Cut Scores for Proficiency Levels

Grade Level	Fail Basic	Pass Proficient	Advanced Proficient
Grade 4 Math	17/50	31/50	45/50
Grade 5 Math	18/50	31/50	45/50
Grade 6 Math	16/50	28/50	45/50

Note: Information developed from the 2011-12 state assessment technical report

State assessments must meet rigorous federal standards for reliability, validity and technical quality (XDOE, 2012c). The Board of Education publishes an annual report that indicates the SOL tests meet procedural validity criterion (XDOE, 2012c). SOL tests are designed according to a blueprint that ensures consistency from year to year providing evidence of content validity. Educator input from subject matter experts during test development provided evidence of face validity. Several factor analyses are performed scientifically to evaluate the tests for construct validity and reliability (XDOE, 2012c). Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha statistic was calculated to test for internal consistency reliability of the math tests. High alpha values for each grade level math test, Grade 4 (α = .90), Grade 5(α = .90-.91), and Grade 6 (α = .89-.90), verified that the tests were consistent in their measurement (XDOE, 2012).

Data collection instrument for phase two. A reliable measurement of behavior outcomes was needed to examine the connection of PBA and behavior. For the second quantitative phase, the data gathering instrument was the Student Disciplinary Listing for the 2011-12, 2012-13, and 2013-14 school years. Student discipline data are collected and reported monthly to the district as required by the State Board of Education. The Student Disciplinary Listing provided information on the total number of ODRs issued to students during each school year. To ensure reliability of the discipline referral data, each school's standardized ODR form is reviewed annually and modified as needed to align with the district's categories of major and minor ODR offenses as outlined in the SCC (WES, 2014).

Data were gathered for a period prior to, and periods following implementation of PBA. Cut points for ODRs associated with determining students' positive behavior level of support are similar to those mentioned in a study by McIntosh et al. (2010). McIntosh et al.'s cut points consisted of 0-1 ODRs for the Tier 1 or primary zone interventions, 2-5 ODRs for the Tier 2 or secondary zone interventions, and 6 or more ODRs for the intensive and individualized Tier 3 or tertiary zone interventions (McIntosh et al., 2010). For elementary schools in PCPS (2014d), cut points for ODRs are assigned as 0-1 (primary/green zone), 2-3 (secondary/yellow zone) and 4 or more (tertiary/red zone) (C. D. Williams [pseudonym], personal communication, March 25, 2014).

Qualitative Component

In-depth interview data were collected as part of a mixed methods design to address the qualitative research question. According to Persaud (2010), interviews are a technique that involves the interviewer conducting an intensive and purposeful conversation with an interviewee to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation. An individual interview prompts interviewees to talk in depth about the topic under investigation to understand their perspectives and interpretations through a set of focused questions. Interviews have been utilized to research aspects of positive behavior. Nocera, Whitbread, & Nocera (2014) used in-depth interviews to conduct a comprehensive review of schoolwide academic and behavior improvement. Similar to the procedures for this study, Nocera et al. utilized interviews to gather qualitative data. The authors purposefully selected school staff members to participant in the interviews. In another study, Andreou, McIntosh, Ross, and Kahn (2014) interviewed 17 teachers and administrators to gather perceptions about the sustainability of implementing positive behavior supports. The purpose for using in-depth interviews for this study was to build a conversation with participants to capture staff perceptions and understandings about the school's PBA program that could not have been obtained from statistical data. The findings of the two studies published in peer-reviewed journals suggested that conducting in-depth interviews were an effective way of gathering the qualitative data for each topic. Additionally, use of interviews in the aforementioned

studies seemed to substantiate the use of interviews in this study to understand teacher perceptions about the effectiveness of the implementation of PBA.

The instrument used for collecting the qualitative data was an interview protocol administered by the researcher. The protocol was designed as a script that guided the interview process. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with teacher and specialist participants. The interviews varied in length. Shorter interviews were held with primary teachers lasting approximately 25 minutes. Interviews with the upper grade and specialist teachers lasted approximately 30-40 minutes. Using an interview protocol helped ensure the consistency of the interviews and allowed further probing for explanations and clarifications (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Persaud, 2010). The instrument consisted of six primary open-ended questions developed by the researcher from relevant literature that were asked at each of the interviews. The interview questions were first reviewed by a panel of professional educators with considerable knowledge and experience in the field of positive behavior practices and research. Seeking the input of the panel proved the reliability of the instrument and established content validity (Glesne, 2011). The comments and suggestions in the form of critical feedback from the panel members' review of the interview questions were used to modify and improve the questions before beginning the interviews. Improving the questions contributed to ensuring the questions would yield the responses expected to meet the goals of the study. A copy of the interview questions has been provided in Appendix B. Eight of the nine interviews were digitally recorded with participants' prior consent, and the information

transcribed and coded. Nordstrom (2015) suggested that recording devices are necessary in qualitative data collection because of their use in preserving participants' natural interactions. Even so, Participant 6 (P6) elected to not have the interview recorded.

After receiving consent electronically from each participant, the emails with the words, "I consent" were saved in a password protected computer file on a personal computer. Interviews were then scheduled based on the availability and convenience of the participants. To keep track of the data, a file naming system was used which included an alphabet identification code assigned to each participant, date of data collection, and sequential interview number. The de-identified file name was included in the footer of each document for easy tracking. Only the researcher had access to the information. A duplicate or hard copy of all data has been kept in labeled folders stored in a locked file cabinet for safekeeping. To comply with university policy, all data will be stored for a minimum of 5 years and will be available upon request as deemed appropriate.

Managing the quantitative and qualitative data were an essential part of the data collection process. Raw data in the form of de-identified math scores and number of ODRs were gathered from the school district. Data were copied to a password-protected computer and flash drive for secure storage. To ensure the privacy of the subjects, the school, and the school district, only de-identified raw data will be available upon request.

Data Analysis

A sequential explanatory case study design utilized the findings from the textural data to build on the statistical data (Caruth, 2013; Creswell, 2012; Teddlie & Tashakkori,

2012). Different statistical tests were conducted to address the two quantitative research questions using the IBM Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) version 21 computer software program. Only the researcher was involved in analyzing the data. The quantitative portion was completed in two phases followed by the qualitative portion.

A repeated-measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Friedman's two-way ANOVA were conducted to analyze both within-groups and between groups to determine differences over three time points. The ANOVA tests allow the same subjects to participate in all levels of the intervention (Kirkpatrick & Feeney, 2013). For the inferential statistical analyses, the same group of participants was subjected to identical behavioral management procedures on three different levels. The 2011-12 math test scores and number of ODRs were used to establish baseline data to compare the statistical changes in behavior and achievement outcomes. The ANOVA's were conducted to test the null hypotheses. The analyses determined if there were statistically significant differences, and the level of significance, in the means of the matched SOL scaled math test scores for RQ1, and in the number of ODRs for RQ2, one year prior to the implementation of PBA and the subsequent two years PBA was launched at the school. Data were mean ± standard deviation.

Research Question 1

What is the difference in students' standardized math scores across the years prior to implementation, 2011-12 , and following implementation, 2012-13 and 2013-14 of the PBA program?

For the first quantitative phase, RQ1, the association of PBA and math achievement within-subjects was examined using a repeated measures ANOVA. For this research question, I tested the null hypothesis that the scaled math scores of the 72 subjects would remain the same after implementing PBA or, alternatively, implementation of PBA would not influence the math scores differently. Conditions included the initial year the blended behavior management program was launched, SY 2011-12, and the following two years, SY 2012-13 and SY 2013-14. The scale of measurement for the independent variable, time was measured on a categorical scale. Math scores, the dependent variable were measured on a continuous interval scale. Interval data were produced from the SOL math scores because test scores have a numeric value and relate to the number correct on the test (raw score). Raw scores are converted to scale scores based on an item response theory analysis. A difference within-subjects was analyzed by measuring each subject's SOL math test scores at three different times. During Year 1, the subjects were in the fourth grade (baseline), Year 2 the fifth grade (first year of implementation), and Year 3 the sixth grade (second year of implementation). A comparison was made between Years 1 and 2, Years 2 and 3, and Years 3 and 1 to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in academic achievement, as measured by the scaled math scores. Overall results of the comparison for the student samples are reported in the findings section of the study for RQ1.

Research Question 2

What is the difference in students' number of ODRs across the years prior to implementation, 2011-12, and following implementation, 2012-13 and 2013-14 of the PBA program?

The second quantitative phase, RQ2, involved examining the association of PBA and student behavior across a 3 year period using the Friedman's two-way ANOVA Test. For this research question, I tested the null hypothesis that the number of ODRs for the 72 subjects would remain the same after implementing PBA or, alternatively, implementation of PBA would not influence the number of ODRs differently. The scale of measurement for the independent variable was time and was measured on a categorical scale. The dependent variable, ODRs was measured on a continuous scale. A difference within-subjects was measured by comparing the number of ODRs of the subjects. As with the first quantitative phase, a comparison was made between Years 1 and 2, Years 2 and 3, and Years 3 and 1 to determine if a statistically significant difference existed in behavior, as measured by the number of ODRs. Results of the comparison of the student samples are reported in the findings section of the study for RQ2.

Research Question 3

What are teachers' perceptions of the PBA program's effectiveness?

For RQ3, the qualitative data were collected through individual interviews. Interviews were conducted to gain insight into teachers' experiences with the implementation of PBA and the connection between academic achievement, and

behavior. According to the local school district's research guidelines, I was permitted to interview a maximum of ten teachers. Nine interviews were conducted with three primary teachers representing grades K-2, four upper grade teachers representing grades 3-6, and two specialists. Participants' years of employment at the school ranged from 4 years to over 15 years. Following data collection, interview data were analyzed. Glesne (2011) stated that "qualitative data analysis is an iterative and reflexive process that begins as data are being collected" (p. 322). Even though statistical software was used for the analysis of the quantitative data, I preferred to use a traditional method for coding the qualitative data without the assistance of software. Coding is the process that allows researchers to examine qualitative data by creating themes for the purpose of sorting and labeling data to make sense of the text (Creswell, 2012; DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall, & McCulloch, 2011; Glesne, 2011). The recorded interview data were first transcribed (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011). Text from the interviews was typed into a word document. Transcribing the text was a time intensive process (Creswell, 2012). Data were then segmented and coded. A method of open coding defined by DeCuir-Gunby et al. (2011) was used to analyze the interview data to identify common responses and recurring patterns in participants' responses. Analysis of the data ended when it was determined that no new knowledge was being generated, and saturation of possible responses had been reached. From the identified themes, data were interpreted to develop the findings to investigate staff perceptions of PBA and the quantitative links of the academic data and the behavioral data.

Trustworthiness of the qualitative data collection and analysis processes were established using the triangulation and member checking techniques (Carlson, 2010; Harper & Cole, 2012). Triangulation refers to using multiple data sources or methods to develop a complete picture of a phenomenon (Glesne, 2011; Greene, 2014; Torrance, 2012). Yin (2014), along with Glesne (2011), mentioned that triangulation should occur throughout data analysis with the researcher constantly comparing sets of data to corroborate and strengthen the findings. For the purposes of this study, math test scores, ODRs, and interview data were compared during data analysis to examine the consistency of the results and to validate the findings. Reliability of the coding process was established through member checking. Data were examined for accuracy of interpretation of the participants' responses about their perceptions and experiences with implementing PBA. Member checking was suitable for the study because it allowed any researcher biases to be uncovered while improving the accuracy, validity and credibility of the researcher's interpretation of the interview data (Carlson, 2010; Harper & Cole, 2012; Torrance, 2012). For the member check, participants were given the opportunity by email to confirm the accuracy of their initial interview data, as well as refine or add to their transcript. All participants accepted their account as accurate. In addition, no new data were added to the transcript.

Integration of the data followed the procedures commonly used in a sequential explanatory mixed methods design. Priority was given to the quantitative data, not only because it was collected first, but also because it represented the major portion of the data

collection. The quantitative data in the form of math test scores and ODRs were gathered and analyzed for each of the quantitative phases to address RQ1 and RQ2. Next was the collection and analysis of data from the interviews for the qualitative phase. The goal for the qualitative data was to explore perceptions about the implementation of PBA to help explain the statistical results that were acquired in the quantitative phases. Following up the quantitative phases with the qualitative interviews provided a greater understanding of the effectiveness of PBA and its links to students' behavior and achievement. All data were summarized leading to a mixed interpretation of the entire analysis of the outcomes of the study.

Assumptions and Potential Limitations

It was assumed, as seen in the literature, that if the evidence-based behavior management practices were implemented with high fidelity, the result would be improved academic and behavior outcomes for students. Kretlow and Bartholomew (2010) pointed out that a strong connection existed between fidelity of implementation and increased academic achievement. Other assumptions were related to data collection. It was assumed that the archival data in the form of scaled math scores and number of ODRs were entered accurately into the school's web-based student records system. It was also assumed that the school provided the correct data on the sample students used in this research study. The assumption regarding the qualitative portion of the study was that WES' teachers and specialists would voluntarily participate in the study. Participants were assured that all identities would be protected, and data kept secure. The assurance of

anonymity and confidentiality guided the assumption that all participants would willingly share their perceptions about, and their experiences with, the school's PBA program openly and honestly with me because of my role as a researcher, and not just as a colleague.

This doctoral study produced several potential limitations that needed to be considered. Simon and Goes (2013) mentioned that limitations are circumstances that are not able to be controlled by the researcher, and that may influence the credibility of the study. The inability to control the independent variables and to randomly select participants has an effect on the study's internal validity. Another limitation to consider involves generalizability. The case study was confined only to a single suburban elementary school implementing a particular blended behavior management approach. The behavior at the study site may not reflect the behavior at similar sites which restricts the generalizability of the quantitative results (Simon & Goes, 2013). Furthermore, the lack of control over the quality of implementation of PBA and the quality of teachers' academic instruction may also affect the results.

Utilizing qualitative research also created limitations. First, because the researcher is the principal investigator and therefore considered the main instrument in qualitative interviews, awareness to researcher bias was required during the qualitative data collection and analysis (Glesne, 2011; Greene, 2014; Xu & Storr, 2012). Second, the interviews involved only a small number of staff which may not have provided a true representation of school or district-wide responses regarding the combined

implementation of PBIS and *RC* behavior management models. The small sample makes the results from the interviews difficult to transfer. Sampling from various regions in the school district may produce more representative results in future studies. Third, confidentiality may produce a limitation. As both the researcher and an employee at the study site, coworkers may have felt compelled to participate in the interviews as a result of the professional relationship between colleagues. Greene (2014), as well as Simon and Goes (2013) noted when insider researchers elicit responses from coworkers, the possibility exists that colleagues may exaggerate or not be truthful in their responses.

Data Analysis Results

The research conducted for this study uncovered quantitative and qualitative connections between PBA, and student academic achievement, and behavior at WES. In keeping with a sequential explanatory strategy, quantitative data were collected and analyzed first, followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data to address the three research questions. The two statistical tests used to analyze the quantitative data consisted of the Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance and the Friedman Test. Both tests were performed using SPSS version 21. In this section, quantitative and qualitative findings were synthesized and presented.

Quantitative Component

The Friedman's Test and repeated-measures ANOVA determined the connections between student behavior and math achievement and the level of statistical differences following the implementation of a blended behavior management program, PBA. For

each test, data were entered into an SPSS spreadsheet respectively. With a repeated measures ANOVA, certain assumptions had to be considered to validate that data were able to be analyzed using the statistical test (Rojewski, In Heok, & Gemici, 2012). Three of the five required assumptions tested for outliers, normality, and sphericity. With the repeated measures ANOVA, there should be no significant outliers in any level of the within-subjects factor; however, the initial test revealed that there were two outliers. Outliers have a negative impact on the repeated-measures ANOVA by distorting the differences between the levels of the within-subjects factor and causes problems when generalizing the results of the sample to the population. The outliers were removed from the analysis when it was determined that the subjects did not meet the criteria for their data to be used in the study. After the subjects had been removed, there were no outliers displayed.

The Shapiro-Wilk test of normality was performed to determine if the data were normally distributed for each level of the within-subjects factor. For the data to be normally distributed, meaning the assumption of normality is met, the significance must be greater than .05. The significance ranged from .061 to .503. Therefore, data for the baseline or pre-PBA scaled math scores, SY 2011-12, and post-intervention math scores, SY 2012-13, and SY 2013-14 were normally distributed.

The last assumption that had to be satisfied for the repeated measures ANOVA to be valid was the assumption of sphericity between the levels of the within-subjects scaled math scores. Mauchly's test of sphericity tested the null hypothesis that the variances of

the differences between the scaled math scores of the within-subjects factor were equal (Mauchly, 1940). When sphericity is not significant, an adjustment has to be made to the degrees of freedom for both the within-subjects factor and error effect to compensate for the low level. The level of significance had to be greater than $p = .05$. According to Fernandez-Garcia, Vallejo, Livacic-Rojas, Herrero, and Cuesta (2010), citing Greenhouse and Geisser (1959), the Greenhouse-Geisser estimate was a suitable alternative for recalculating the *p*-value. The test results indicated that the assumption of equal variances had been violated, $\chi^2(2) = 7.128$, $p = .028$. A violation meant that the repeated-measures ANOVA would be biased in its analysis and would easily return a statistically significant result. The Mauchly test is not the most statistically robust and violations of sphericity are considered common. The test of sphericity was corrected by using the Greenhouse-Geisser estimate.

Research question 1. Using the repeated measures ANOVA, RQ1 sought to determine whether there were statistically significant differences in academic achievement over the course of the study period, SY 2011 to SY 2014 after PBA was implemented at the local school. In Table 4, the descriptive statistics show that the participant size of each level of the within-subject factor was equal (n=72). The mean for the scaled math scores ranged from a low of 414.83 (SY 2012-13) to 434.29 (SY 2013-14).

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for Scaled Math Scores

Time	Dependent Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
1	Scaled Math Scores 2011-2012	432.88	67.89	72
2	Scaled Math Scores 2012-2013	414.83	57.22	72
3	Scaled Math Scores 2013-2014	434.29	43.87	72

Note: The scaled math scores represent academic achievement during the baseline year (Time point 1) and subsequent years (Time point 2 and Time point 3). Information developed from SPSS output for repeated measures ANOVA.

When considering the mean differences, there did not seem to be an established trend of increase or decrease successively, but the estimated means chart displayed in Figure 2 clearly shows that the scaled math scores declined from time point 1 to time point 2 and increased from time point 2 to time point 3.

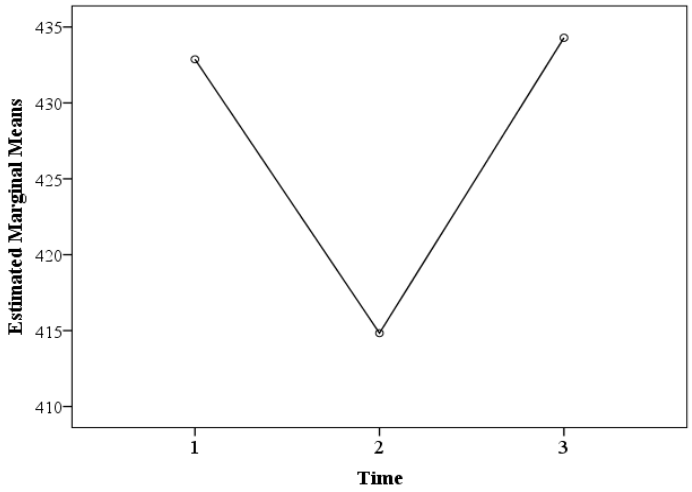

Figure 2: Profile plot of marginal means for time points, 2011-12, 2012-13, and 2013-14. The chart represents the means for the scaled math scores at each point.

In summary, the results of the output produced by SPSS for the repeated-measures ANOVA statistical analysis revealed there were no outliers and the data were normally distributed at each time point, as assessed by a boxplot and the Shapiro-Wilk test ($p > .05$). However, the assumption of sphericity was not met, as assessed by Mauchly's test of sphericity, $\chi^2(2) = 7.128$, $p = .028$. Therefore, Greenhouse-Geisser correction was applied ($\varepsilon = 0.912$). The implementation of PBA was associated with statistically significant changes in math achievement over time as evident in the mean differences between the levels of the within-subjects factor F (1.823, 129.465) = 9.012, $p < .001$. Post hoc testing was conducted to determine where the differences were between the pairwise comparisons. Mean is significant at the .05 level. Therefore, the decrease in academic achievement from 2011-12 when PBA was launched (M = 432.88, SD = 67.89 mg/L) to the first year of implementation [Year 2] (M = 414.83, SD = 57.22 mg/L) was a statistically significant mean decrease of 18.04 mg/L, $p = .002$. There was an increase in academic achievement from Year 2 to the second year of implementation [Year 3] (M = 434.29, SD = 0.43 mg/L), which was also a statistically significant mean increase of 19.45 mg/L, $p < .001$. However, from Year 1 (pre-PBA) to Year 3 (post-PBA), there was not a statistically significant mean difference (1.41 mg/L, $p = 1.00$). Since $p < .05$ for two time points, it was determined that there was a statistically significant difference between means and, therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. While initially there was a decline in the math scores from Year 1 to Year 2 and an increase from Year 2 to Year 3, the

slight difference in the net performance rendered the results inconclusive to determine the influence of PBA on math achievement.

Similar to the results from the repeated-measures ANOVA, the percentage of the sample that met the state benchmark based on the SOL proficiency levels improved after the second year of implementing PBA. In SY 2011-12, 64.8% of the sample met the basic proficiency level with 70% being the state benchmark. After the first year of implementation, 2012-13, the number decreased slightly by 8.1% to only a 56.7% pass rate. At the end of the second year of implementation, 2013-14, proficiency of the sample increased to a pass rate of 74.3% which was a 9.5% increase in the pass rate from the baseline data (Year 1). The 74.3% pass rate (Year 3) was a 17.6% increase from the previous year (Year 2). Table 5 indicates that the aggregated scale score for subjects during Year 3 was 4% higher than the all school average and 7% higher than the actual state benchmark. Regarding RQ1, the overall increase of the math scores from the baseline to the second year of implementation of PBA did not yield a significant net increase.

Table 5

Math Performance for Sample by Grade Level

Data Source	Pre-PBA Baseline 2011-12	Implementation Year 1 2012-13	Implementation Year 2 2013-14
Grade level Performance	4th Grade 64	5th Grade 47	6th Grade 77
All School Performance	73	68	73
State Benchmark	70	70	70

Note: Aggregated scaled math scores by grade level retrieved from http://www.PCPS.edu

Research question 2. For RQ2, the repeated measures ANOVA was used first to determine if statistically significant differences occurred in the number of ODRs after the implementation of PBA. The repeated measures ANOVA requires the assumptions of a normal distribution and equal variances to be met. When analyzing the number of ODRs using the repeated measures ANOVA, the assumption of normality was clearly violated. The analysis was then run using a nonparametric test, the related samples Friedman's two-way ANOVA (Friedman test). The Friedman test is an alternative to the repeated measures ANOVA without the restrictions of having to meet certain assumptions to validate that data were able to be analyzed using that particular test.

The Friedman test was run to determine if there were differences in the number of ODRs over the course of the study period, SY 2011 to SY 2014 after PBA was implemented at the local school. The output displayed in Table 6 shows the significance level as $p = .009$ which is less than .05 needed to determine overall significance. The data

in Table 6 also revealed that the Friedman test null hypothesis, (H_0) – The distribution of the number of ODRs are the same, can be rejected.

Table 6

Group Comparison Hypothesis Test Summary

Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
The distributions of the Number of ODRs 2011-12, Number of ODRs 2012-13, and Number of ODRs 2013-14 are the same	Friedman's Two-Way ANOVA by Ranks	.009	Reject the null hypothesis

Note. Information developed from SPSS output data for Friedman Test of group comparison of number of ODRs. ODR = office discipline referral. Sig.= Significance

Pairwise comparisons of related samples were performed with a Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons $\chi 2(2) = 9.500$, $p < .05$. Post hoc analysis of group comparisons revealed that the number of ODRs decreased from baseline Year 1, 2011-12 (M = 1.93), to Year 2, 2012-13 (M = 1.90), but increased from Year 2, 2012-13 (M = 1.90) to Year 3, 2013-14 (M = 2.17) and Year 1, 2011-12 (M = 1.93), to Year 3, 2013-14 (M = 2.17). Application of the Friedman's test showed changes in the distribution of the number of ODRs over the three time points of the study. Though the null hypothesis was able to be rejected, and differences were observed, the statistical differences between the years were not significant enough to be determined.

Post hoc analysis of individual year statistics for the 72 subjects revealed that none of the differences between the 3years are statistically significant. Table 7 displaying individual year differences showed that the maximum number of ODRs issued to an

individual subject for the 3 years of the study occurred in Year 1, 2011-12. Also reported in Table 7 are the individual year differences based on significance values: Year 1, 2011-12 (M = 0.99) (p = .83), Year 2, (2012-13) (M = 0.83) (p = .09), and Year 3, 2013-14 (M = 1.33) (p = .14). Since the level of significance is .05, significance data indicates that none of the differences between the 3 years are statistically significant.

Table 7

Individual Year Differences Summary

	N	Max. number of individual ODRs	Mean Difference	Sig.	Std. Dev.
Year 1 2011-12	72	20	0.99	.83	2.81
Year 2 2012-13	72	12	0.83	.09	2.48
Year 3 2013-14	72	17	1.33	.14	3.34

Note: Data for report of individual year differences developed from SPSS output of Friedman test continuous field information.

Qualitative Component

The focus of the analysis was on the guiding research question, "What are teachers' perceptions of the PBA program's effectiveness?", and the subquestion, "What are teachers' experiences with the PBA program?." Participants were first asked to answer three background items. Following the background items, the participants were requested to respond to the six open-ended interview questions. Participants provided unique insights and seemingly sincere responses related to their experiences with PBA. Nondirective probes were used so participants could provide complete answers about

their experiences (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Persaud, 2010). Thick descriptions about PBA and its impact at their school were recorded to allow readers to make their interpretation of the data. The data-driven coding process consisted of creating a codebook, reviewing and revising the themes, and establishing reliability (DeCuir-Gundy et al., 2011). Utilizing focused interview questions and probes allowed data saturation to be reached.

The 9 semi-structured interviews were conducted during the final month of the school year. Research indicated that during the end of the year, teacher morale can be low. Some teachers may have reached a point of fatigue, exhaustion, and stress that can impact teachers' resilience to maintain a healthy or positive attitude (Gloria, Faulk, & Steinhardt, 2012). Interviews took place either before or after school, outside of school contract hours at a time convenient for each participant.

Research question 3. For RQ3, the analysis focused on understanding teachers' perceptions about, and experiences with implementing PBA. The results were categorized according to the themes and presented in alignment with the interview question. The identified themes that emerged included: Articulation of program expectations, Successes/challenges with program initiatives, Effective/ineffective discipline practices, Professional learning, and Systemic changes to policies/procedures. Interpretation of participants' perspectives, as well as direct quotes, was used to present the results.

Theme 1– Communicating expectations. Interview question 1 prompted participants to share about the expectations for implementing PBA and how the

expectations were communicated to staff. Many of the responses were similar. Participants recounted how expectations were communicated to staff through a 30-minute overview of PBA presented by the school's Positive Behavior Support team during the first week of school. Participant 3 (P3) found it difficult to process the information along with the other information shared in the same session. Participants also mentioned that expectations were communicated to them by their team Positive Behavior Support representative and through documents posted on the Blackboard site. P1 and P8 emphasized that the only expectation communicated clearly to staff was to complete an *RC* course. *RC* courses were offered through the district's professional learning series at various off-site locations. Staff members were supposed to have completed the *RC* training by SY 2013-14. Out of the 9 participants, 7 were in compliance (77.7%). A conversation with school leaders indicated staff compliance to be at least 90% (E. F Smith [pseudonym], personal communication, July 2014). Other than the training requirement, several of the participants shared that the expectation of implementing PBA was only inferred. P3 stated, "No expectations were communicated, except [that] we have a blended approach with PBA and responsive classroom...and that admin doesn't like certain aspects of PBA." In support of P3's view, P5 acknowledged there are expectations, but they are "not communicated clearly." P1 stated that the expectations were "deduced from the posters." The data highlighted many similarities. Interview responses showed that participants expressed having knowledge of PBA, with expectations of implementation assumed. Feuerborn and Chinn (2012) identified staff

perception, buy-in, and level of support for the school's discipline practices as a necessary component of implementing classroom and schoolwide behavior programs with fidelity. Participants' responses suggested having expectations defined may contribute to increasing buy-in.

Theme 2 – Program initiatives. For interview question 2, participants' responses revealed their perception of the effectiveness of various PBA initiatives. The initiatives that participants commented most that brought success were the Hallway Hero Tickets and Morning Meeting. In conjunction with operant conditioning and the use of positive reinforcements to modify behavior, WES students earned Hallway Hero tickets when observed being quiet in the school hallways. On the whole, the participants agreed that the hallway ticket incentive worked well, at least in the short term. The participants that taught primary students mainly voiced positive comments about the incentive. P2, P6, and P8 remarked that the hallway tickets were relevant only to students in the primary grades. P2 and P6 shared that students became motivated to earn tickets when it became a competition. Once the reward ticket was received, students had to be given several reminders to stop talking which caused P2 to consider what lesson was being learned from the initiative. P7 and P8 remarked that the tickets were not appropriate for the older students. P1, P5, and P9 questioned the use of external rewards to change behavior. P9 stated that students should be motivated to obey schoolwide rules and procedures just for "goodness sake."

Participants expressed experiencing success with the Morning Meeting more than with the Closing Circle. According to P2 and P6, morning meetings were an effective way to start the day. P8 mentioned morning meetings were "highly effective" for building community and for getting students to work together. Though teachers experienced success with morning meetings, data showed that only 3 of the 7 participants representing the primary and upper grades were consistent with implementing the initiative with fidelity. Many asserted that the inconsistency in implementation was due to the lack of time, or as P6 stated, "...time constraints because of instructional responsibilities." Morning meeting worked well for P9 because it was tailored to meet the needs of the students. Participants stated that doing the closing circle did not always work with the schedule because it impacted other parts of the curriculum. In agreement, P3 stated that" there was simply no time to do it." The transition back to homeroom classes interfered with implementing the activity. Participants who taught primary grades did not have success consistently with implementing closing circle as well. It was mentioned that the staff needed training in PBA to implement the initiatives effectively.

Not much was revealed in the data about the use of the matrix, behavior intervention plans/pride reports, or the behavior clinic. The data showed that participants that had experiences with the pride reports considered them to be successful with some students. P3, P5, and P6 felt that when a behavior plan did not work for a student, it was because the plan was not suited to meet the student's needs. P8 gave examples to support the notion that the behavior plans "produced a lot of negativity." Participants that utilized

the clinic resources spoke favorably about it. One participant had forgotten the behavior clinic services were available because it was seldom talked about in the [staff] meetings. P8 commented that "the behavior clinic was not effective. We didn't hear much about it. We didn't talk about that at our meetings. I forgot there was a behavior clinic." Regarding the initiatives a participant stated that, "There was buy-in in the primary grades. They [school administrators] have to be realistic about what they are asking us [teachers] to do." The participant did not elaborate on their answer; but instead, asked for reassurance that I would not be sharing their responses with anyone in leadership. Regarding the initiatives, P6 thought they were appropriate for the entire school and that success with the initiatives schoolwide was based on implementation. However P4 said, "Teachers are more overwhelmed and have fewer opportunities to work together on new initiatives. Participants mentioned other programs in isolation such as Morning Program, Second Step, and Olweus.

Theme 3 – Behavior changes. Interview question 3 asked participants to consider what changes in behavior had taken place over the past 3 years since the implementation of PBA. The data clearly indicated that all participants were in agreement that WES' problem with students displaying noncompliant behaviors have grown increasingly worse in the past 3 years. Four of the participants noted that stricter consequences were needed for students that violated the code of conduct. Three participants mentioned that more stringent accountability measures enforced by school administrators needed to be in place to improve disruptive student behavior. One participant noticed improvement in behavior

since implementing PBA, and 1 participant out of the 9 elected not to respond to the question. Most participants expressed openly about how they felt about student behavior. A sample transcription of coding using interview question 3 can be found in Appendix C.

The interview data revealed that participants felt there was a decline in the behavior. According to the data, participants commented further that the presence of teachers or administrators at times do not cause students to change their behavior. P1 remarked that, "Students constantly push the limits of acceptable behavior with teachers and admin." P9 said, "Negative behaviors have multiplied exponentially, and to a degree have engulfed a sizeable chunk of the 'good feeling' that should be present in an elementary school." P2 described an incident where a student from a different class became confrontational and challenged the participant's authority just because the student was asked to stop running in the cafeteria. Similar incidents were revealed in the data regarding teacher confrontations with students.

From the interviews, the most frequent classroom misbehaviors included disrespect, talking out of turn, and non-compliance to classroom rules and procedures that one participant explained usually led to defiance. On the other end, as revealed in the data a small percentage of students displayed physically and verbally aggressive type behaviors that disrupted instruction and that created a safety issue for the teacher and other students in the class. Administrators handled behaviors at the red zone level. Six of the participants were critical of the administrators' methods. P1 reported that, "Students seem to know that the school will do very little in terms of consequences for bad

behavior." Another participant added that, "Teachers go through the hierarchy but are still frustrated because they haven't been supported by the administration." Staff members are charged with the responsibility of managing student behaviors that often interrupt instruction resulting in an ODR. Furthermore, a majority of the participants were dissatisfied with the outcome of the assigned discipline for the offense. In short, results from interview question 3 revealed that there was a consensus among participants that discipline was taking up too much time from instruction, though philosophical differences existed about assigning greater consequences to students for inappropriate behavior to put the ownership of the problematic behavior back on the student. Lastly, it was also revealed that participants indicated behavioral support should be a priority.

Theme 4 – Discipline policy. Data for interview question 4 indicated that seven participants agreed that the *Hierarchy of Consequences* was a useful tool for handling most issues with student behavior. Moreover, three participants suggested an adoption of a get-tough discipline policy for dealing with challenging behaviors. P5 emphasized that for teachers to do their job effectively more staff support is needed when behaviors reach the office level. P2 said, "The hierarchy is a nice reference, but it's not always plausible in every situation." When discussing the hierarchy, P6 stated, "From what I've witnessed around the school, teachers go through the hierarchy but are still frustrated because they haven't been supported by the administration." P5 added, "If we analyzed and graphed student referrals and their effect on student achievement, I'm sure we could conclude that as the bad behavior rises, the student achievement drops." This fluctuation is frustrating

and defeating for teachers who follow the hierarchy correctly." Contrary to other participants, P1 and P9 could not recall not being supported by school leaders.

Regarding ODRs, P7 stated, "When behavior requires an office referral, I've found that consequences aren't consistent, and they don't always deter bad choices." P6 and P8 remarked that when writing office referrals, they had not been returned. P8 explained that, "It's filled out and then it's never, not once been returned to me this school year. I don't necessarily know what's happening when I do make that referral." From the interview data, it was determined that all participants had written at least one referral where there were concerns about how it was handled.

Theme 5 – Professional learning. Background data obtained during the interview revealed that participants had received some training in positive behavior, mostly, *RC*. P1 stated, "I do not think I need more training at this time." Besides P1 and two other participants that indicated no additional professional learning was needed, several participants suggested potential topics that would be of interest for future learning. P7 suggested a topic to study that was mentioned during a brainstorming session at a school-based Positive Behavior Support meeting. Comments by P7 revealed a request for professional learning about "ways to track student behavior and collect data effectively to monitor consequences and interventions, similar to the way we collect data on academic progress." Additional suggestions from participants about professional learning revealed that participants expressed the need for a clear understanding of the PBA philosophy. P8 confessed, "I am confused. The training I would like to see is to learn what it is as a

school we are going to support consistently. What is our philosophy about behavior?" P9 suggested professional learning in classroom management by inviting a renowned guest speaker with a proven track record for dealing with students that present challenging behaviors. The results indicated that teachers prefer training that is relevant to them. Avalos (2011) commented that when professional development training is relevant, the program will likely be implemented properly.

Theme 6 – Systemic change. As consistent with the responses for Theme 3, the data for interview question 5 reflected that all participants felt there needed to be a change to the school's schoolwide procedures for managing extreme problem behaviors. P2 said, "I am not sure what the answer to our school's problem should be, but I do feel that administration needs to be on top of all behavior." P4 stated, "We can add or subtract as many programs as we want to, but if the administration downplays the importance of strict student discipline and protecting the classroom learning environment, then no program will work effectively." Data showed that several participants felt there needed to be consistency in the manner in which consequences are given out. P3 said that "consequences to various issues needed to be the same despite the student, their background, and family circumstances." P4 speaking frankly stated that, "Students need to be held accountable for their actions. If not, I believe that we are failing them." Participants' perceptions revealed that disruptive and inappropriate behaviors exhibited by students often received inappropriate consequences. Given such perspectives, participants tended to express dissatisfaction with the behavior management procedures.

In short, the results of the data analysis indicated that the teachers in this study focused more on individual student behavior when describing the effectiveness of the PBA initiatives rather than on the schoolwide implementation of the program. The results also indicated that teachers tended to believe they have limited influence to modify student behavior. Lastly, the data analysis of participants' perspectives revealed that future support for the implementation of PBA would be unlikely unless changes were made to the program, and appropriate training provided.

Interpretation of Results

The purpose of this study was to investigate the connections between a blended behavior management program and student behavior and academic achievement, as well as staff perceptions about their experience with implementing the program with fidelity. The blended positive behavior management approach, PBA, was designed to help school teams to implement universal strategies that meet the behavioral needs of the school to prevent discipline occurrences from becoming problematic. Understanding staff perceptions about PBA is an important component to achieving 80% or greater staff support and buy-in and for ensuring sustained implementation (Algozzine et al., 2010; Feuerborn, Tyre, & King, 2015). The theoretical basis for implementing PBA emphasized using a proactive approach for managing behavior to increase students' social and academic skills. Test scores, ODRs, and interview data were triangulated to provide a deeper understanding of the connection between teacher perception of the effectiveness of implementing a blended behavior program, and behavior and

achievement. Quantitative data were gathered and analyzed followed by the qualitative data collection and analysis. Each set of results was reported in a subsection. This sequential explanatory approach called for the qualitative data to inform the quantitative results. Combining the results of the respective data produced inconsistent findings.

The repeated measures ANOVA and Friedman test together produced largely consistent results. The results supported the hypothesis of RQ1 and RQ2 that there would be a statistically significant difference in test scores and ODRs after implementing PBA. Quantitative data analysis results provided evidence that with the implementation of PBA students' math achievement increased during two time points. Also incidences of disruptive behavior, as measured by the number of ODRs, decreased after the second full year of implementing PBA. In both instances, test scores and ODRs, the null hypothesis was rejected because a statistical difference was found at least during one of the years of the study. Despite the positive statistical change in student outcomes, participants' attitudes toward the effectiveness of PBA were not as positive as indicated by responses to the interview questions mentioned in the qualitative findings subsection. Quotes of participants' responses suggested that teachers considered the PBA program to be beneficial which verified the quantitative results. However, participants in the study also considered aspects of the PBA program initiatives to be ineffective for promoting desired student behavior.

Overall, results showed that all of the participants in the study implemented the PBA initiatives, but most without fidelity. Participants described conducting morning

meetings and distributing reward tickets for following hallway procedures, but neither was done consistently. Explanations provided by participants to explain the low fidelity of implementing the PBA initiatives varied. A few explanations consisted of a lack of adequate training, administrative support, overwhelmed with job responsibilities, and time. Ross, Romer, and Horner (2012) asserted that teachers overwhelmed by the demands of implementing the behavior management processes often do not understand how the schoolwide system process fit within the classroom. Participants of upper grade students and teacher specialists expressed the most dissatisfaction with the PBA initiatives that seemed to impact buy-in and implementation. Feuerborn and Chinn (2012) claimed that teacher perceptions about behavior management can affect implementation of interventions. Of the nine participants, only two (22.2%) expressed support for implementing PBA as is, whereas seven (77.7%) recommended change to the program for the school to continue to experience academic growth. Buy-in improves when staff members view the behavior management initiatives as viable means to help them be productive in their classroom. Consistent with the interview data, teachers in the study seemed more concerned about the impact of PBA on student behavior rather than student achievement. Boneshefski et al. (2014) asserted that there are times when a school experiences academic success even though the behavior management program has been ineffective for some of the students. Participants' acknowledgment about the inconsistency in which the PBA initiatives were implemented revealed a gap in teachers' PBA practices resulting in a recommendation for additional training. Feuerborn and

Chinn (2012) noted that when staff members recognize a need for change in their school's behavior management practices, support for implementation is likely. It is important to note that when the interviews were conducted, the school had met state benchmarks in all core subjects. In addition, students identified as needing red zone interventions had received a large percentage of the ODRs for the 2014-15 school year than any of the years associated with the study period. And lastly, upper grade teachers taught in a departmentalized setting that contributed to greater variability in implementation.

Conclusion

Section 2 was used to describe the methodology that was utilized in this study. The sequential explanatory mixed methods case study design was described, along with the setting and sample strategies, data collection and analysis procedures, quantitative and qualitative data analyses results to include a detailed account of teachers' perceptions regarding the implementation of PBA, and the protection of participants' rights. Baseline levels of group ODRs and test scores were matched to subsequent intervention levels across three different time points. Data analysis results suggest that implementing PBA decreased levels of disruptive behavior as measured by ODRs and increased levels of student achievement as measured by test scores. Results also revealed inconsistencies when implementing the school's blended behavior management program. Section 3 includes a detailed description of the project that developed from the findings to improve teachers' implementation fidelity of the school's behavior management practices.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

This project study investigated the connections between the PBA program and behavior and academic achievement. Teachers at WES are expected to effectively deal with student misbehavior so that all students can be supported and their behavior and academic needs can be met. The genre selected for the project to address the local problem was professional development. The Department of Education considers professional development an umbrella term encompassing a variety of specialized training intended to improve professional practice and effectiveness of teachers and administrators (ED, 2010). The purposes of conducting professional training, as cited by Caffarella and Daffron (2013), are to encourage skill building, to respond to systemic problems, to prepare for future prospects, to achieve the desired goal, or to foster change. Professional development was selected for the project because focused training on the PBA program would allow staff members to strengthen their knowledge and practice that encourages growth and development. The project will provide classroom teachers and other staff members with professional training to implement the blended behavior management program schoolwide.

Two findings from the data analysis results were used to guide the plan for the project. First, the qualitative results indicated there was a lack of understanding among teachers in the study regarding expectations for implementing the blended behavior management approach with fidelity. Second, the analysis also revealed that teachers were

in need of professional development that offered training in evidence-based strategies and methods to handle students' challenging behaviors adequately. Abry et al. (2013) acknowledged that professional development which includes training and follow-up support is associated with a high quality of fidelity when implementing program initiatives.

Project Goals

The problem described in this study was an increase in disruptive behavior and ODRs and a decline in math achievement. The issuance of ODRs required a teacher response, increasing teacher attention away from instruction and excluding students from the classroom setting. Based on the interview data, participants in the study acknowledged receiving staff development on PBA. However, the information presented to the staff during the fall training was too general which hindered teachers from implementing the program components with fidelity. Based on the needs revealed by the participants, 3 full day sessions of professional training conducted at different times throughout the school year was planned.

Four goals were established for the project. The goals are: (a) to clarify the expectations for all staff regarding implementation of the school's PBA practices, (b) to present current research regarding best practices for implementing the blended behavior program initiatives, (c) to engage staff in relevant training on evidenced-based strategies to manage challenging behaviors to create classroom environments conducive for learning, and (d) to increase staff buy-in. Research suggests at least 80% buy-in is needed

to implement a behavior management program successfully (Algozzine et al., 2010; Feuerborn et al., 2015). Over time, staff members' participation in meaningful professional development training should lead to improved buy-in for PBA and sustained school capacity.

Rationale

Professional development was selected as a result of the qualitative findings that supported a need for training in the area of PBA for key stakeholders to properly manage student behavior to reduce interruptions to instruction. In addition, the notion that implementing a positive behavior approach with fidelity reduces ODRs and improves academic achievement was also taken into account when selecting the project genre. Teachers considered classroom management an area of concern, and therefore, a priority for professional development (McCready & Soloway, 2010; Sun & Shek, 2012).

The WES grade level teams annually complete the Self-Assessment Guide to evaluate the school's progress in implementing the PBA program. The Likert-type assessment evaluates across six components that include (a) Leadership; (b) Assessment and Planning; (c) Evidenced-based Practices; (d) Professional Development; (e) Instruction and Integration; and (f) Beliefs. As evidenced by the results of the Self-Assessment Guide, the professional development score component remained unchanged during the study period, SY 2011-12 through SY 2013-14. When comparing the ratings across the years, the professional development component received as low as 2.6 out of a 5 point rating scale. Consistent with the assessment ratings, WES' teacher interview data

revealed that the lack of regular professional development opportunities on PBA and behavior management was a hindrance to maintaining a positive school climate, as well as positive teacher morale.

PBA was launched at WES in 2011-12. While the quantitative findings of this study may have suggested that implementing PBA had some influence on improving math achievement and on the number of ODRs, teacher perception revealed that the improvement, though slight, was not enough to produce an optimal learning or working environment. Qualitative data indicated that the amount of time teachers spent managing challenging behaviors interfered with them being able to implement PBA consistently. Student compliance is necessary for creating and maintaining an effective and efficient learning environment. Lane et al. (2012) emphasized the importance of implementing with fidelity the positive interventions aimed at preventing problematic behaviors. Implementing a successful behavioral program requires participation and buy-in from a majority of staff members.

Fallon, McCarthy, and Sanetti (2014) viewed staff buy-in as being the greatest barrier to implementation and sustainability. Lack of buy-in is usually associated with low teacher morale which compromises the program's effectiveness. The problem of excessive behavioral disruptions to classroom instruction and low math achievement will be addressed through the content of the project by providing WES staff with the training needed to improve the sustainability of its blended behavior management program. Implementing effective positive behavioral interventions with fidelity have been heralded

as a real solution to improving both academics and behavior (Guardino & Fullerton, 2010). Through the project, attention will be given to implementation fidelity by (a) developing teachers' classroom management skills through initial and follow-up professional trainings, (b) presenting a plan for monitoring behavior data and communicating the results to staff, (c) building capacity through improved teacher morale, (b), sharing about the use of rewards, (d) as well as ensuring staff members understand the school's philosophy on discipline practices.

Review of the Literature

Educators are faced with having to manage extreme disruptive behaviors in the classroom. Lambert, Tingstrom, Sterling, Dufrene, and Lynne (2015), describing the results of a national survey, reported that 77% of public school teachers felt their teaching would be more effective if less time were focused on student misbehavior. Professional development is an appropriate genre for the project because research indicated that schools which participate in ongoing positive behavior professional development activities experience significant reductions in discipline problems and improvements in academics following training (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Lewis et al., 2010). Also, Bausch (2011) stated that one aspect of a school's commitment to addressing the issue of disruptive behavior is the extent to which time for relevant training for staff is provided.

Skinner's theory of operant conditioning uses both positive and negative reinforcements that are part of positive behavior. Training school staff to use reinforcements appropriately to provide students with behavioral support encourages

acceptable behavior while deterring antisocial behavior. Therefore, professional literature was reviewed that relates to professional development aimed at guiding the WES staff members in the understanding and implementation of PBA with fidelity. Themes used to support the content of the project include professional development, classroom management, student rewards, implementation fidelity, and teacher morale.

Professional Development

One of the foundational principles of school reform is the notion that providing training for educators is critical to student success. Attention to quality professional development began with NCLB legislation to improve the knowledge and skills of administrators and teachers (NCLB, 2002). The Department of Education, in the Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, identified 15 descriptors to characterize what constitutes quality professional development. The legislation states that quality professional development fosters a professional culture to provide stakeholders the knowledge and tools needed to help students meet rigorous State academic requirements. Under Title IX (1972), professional development activities are required to be included in school and districtwide educational plans for the purpose of improving teachers' content knowledge and classroom management skills.

Guo and Yang (2012) described professional development as the primary method that schools use for staff members to continue their learning and develop their skills over time. Studies have shown that quality professional development can lead to an improved classroom experience and improved student performance (Avalos, 2011; Buczynski &

Hansen, 2010; Shaha & Ellsworth, 2013). Barlow, Frick, Barker, and Phelps (2014) established that a highly skilled teacher can produce student gains of at least 2 months ahead of students taught by a less skilled teacher. Desimone (2011) considers professional development content to be of utmost importance to education by asserting that teacher professional development is essential for improving the quality of education in US schools. Kang, Cha, and Ha (2013), in a similar manner, characterized professional development as particularly critical because, when delivered effectively, "it can influence teachers' learning, the method and practice of teaching, and student learning" (p. 11). Opportunities for ongoing professional development experiences can help provide school staff members with a systematic approach to addressing student behavior while improving academic outcomes (Lewis et al., 2010).

Professional development is a broad term that utilizes different types of formats. Burkman (2012) shared that an important component of professional development is the manner in which the content is delivered. A comprehensive analysis of over 1,300 studies was conducted to understand the connection between effective professional development activities and student achievement outcomes (Guskey & Yoon, 2009). According to Guskey and Yoon (2009), the findings from the comprehensive analysis indicated there was a discrepancy among researchers and practitioners about what factors constituted an effective professional development experience. Common methods of professional development revealed in the literature include 1 day workshops, multiday conferences, peer observations, coaching, and collaborative learning embedded in professional

learning communities (Desimone, 2011; Kang et al., 2013). Wei, Darling-Hammond, and Adamson (2010) contended that 1-day or one-shot workshops are the least effective method of teacher professional development and subsequently are the most widely used. The one-shot workshops are usually held off-site and last for 8 hours or less with no follow-up activities or sustained support (Wei et al., 2010). Hill, Besiege, and Jacob (2013) emphasized that the traditional workshops of short duration do not lead to meaningful change in teacher practice or student performance because they tend to overload participants with too much information. Hill et al.'s (2013) assertion about the ineffectiveness of one-shot workshops suggests that duration of the professional development training sessions and activities is connected to the quality and depth of professional learning. Guskey and Yoon (2009) declared that quality professional development that leads to improved student learning focuses on the implementation of evidence-based practices, provides active-learning experiences for participants, and offers opportunities for participants to adapt the practices to their unique classroom needs.

Adults bring a variety of life experiences and established beliefs to the learning experience so facilitators of professional development should approach teaching differently than with younger students. Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2012) described the characteristics of adult learners as self-directed, problem-centered, and results oriented. The authors also explained that adult learners expect to be treated as professionals, and require the learning experience to be relevant and able to be applied to their needs. In the literature, researchers repeatedly cited coaching and collaborative job-embedded professional development experiences tailored to meet the needs of the

learning community as the most effective methods of teacher professional development (Croft, Coggshall, Dolan, & Powers, 2010; Kang, Cha, & Ha, 2013). Job-embedded professional development occurs within the school and allows grade level teams to focus specifically on quality instruction and student achievement. When adult learning experiences are relevant and closely related to the workplace, O'Toole and Essex (2012) stated that the experiences will more than likely "transfer into practice" (p. 185). To tailor the learning to the intended audience, the professional development will be designed using Knowles et al.'s (2012) whole-part-whole learning model.

The whole-part-whole learning model provides a framework that enhances the goals and purposes for adult learning experiences (Knowles et al., 2012). The model exposes learners to an overview of the topic, scaffolds the learning into logical parts, and then connects the learning back to the main topic (Knowles et al., 2012). For this project, the professional development training sessions will be presented using large group learning for the entire staff to present aspects of the PBA program. The training will be based on concepts associated with the study site allowing the adult learners to engage in real-world problem solving. Activities will be performed in small groups and then broken into smaller chunks to avoid cognitive overload and to help keep the staff focused on the topic and engaged in the learning. O'Toole and Essex (2012) explained that "the school setting is a continuous learning environment" (p. 186). Workplace-based, follow-up training sessions will be conducted during grade level professional learning team meetings to provide teachers an opportunity to plan, apply, and evaluate their learning

through collaborative support (O'Toole & Essex, 2012). Consequently, the professional development project was designed to meet the characteristics associated with adult learners.

Marin and Filce (2013) pointed out that state and federal accountability measures compel schools to meet both the academic and behavior needs of students. Consequently, schools are expected to incorporate and implement the best intervention strategies that can successfully address students' behavioral and academic needs. Webster-Stratton, Reinke, Herman, & Newcomer (2011) believe that only well trained teachers can help students who are disruptive to develop appropriate prosocial behaviors that are necessary for academic success. In order to sustain a school's positive behavior program one must first ensure that staff members are equipped with the resources necessary for the successful implementation of the behavioral strategies (Coffey & Horner, 2012). Effective professional learning engages teachers in authentic and valuable learning experiences (Blank, 2013). According to the ESEA Act (Dee & Jacob, 2011), it is expected that each school district requires its schools to include professional development in their annual school improvement goals. At WES, the amount of time teachers spend annually participating in professional learning meets or exceeds district requirements. However, in SY 2012 through SY 2014, the smallest amount of professional development hours were spent on training related to managing classroom behavior (E. F. Smith [pseudonym], personal communication, June 19, 2015).

Classroom Management

Teachers are increasingly asked to accommodate students whose disruptive and off-task behaviors impede their learning, as well as distract the learning of other students in the class. When disruptive classroom behaviors escalate, the behaviors become difficult to manage (Sadruddin, 2012). Jones, Bailey, and Jacob (2014) recognized four principles of effective classroom management: (a) preparation, (b) relationships, (c) procedures, and (d) documentation. The authors emphasized that an effective classroom manager plan and prepares all activities with a purpose that enables them to respond proactively to difficult behaviors that arise. Also positive relationships are fostered, daily routines and structures established, and data-driven strategies are implemented. Emmer and Sabornie (2015) stated the purpose of implementing classroom management strategies is to improve students' prosocial behavior and increase academic engagement. The challenge to creating an environment conducive to teaching and learning has been maintaining effective classroom management.

Classroom management is not a new issue for teachers. Burke, Oats, Ringle, Fichtner, and DelGaudio (2011) reporting the results of a 1987 study involving over 5000 teachers and administrators found that two-thirds of respondents indicated that managing disruptive student behavior was the most stressful part of their day. Tillery et al. (2010) acknowledged that employing preventive classroom management strategies is necessary for creating a safe and supportive environment for instruction and learning to occur. Since orderly classrooms are linked to better performance (OECD, 2013), schools with

excessive discipline problems are less conducive to student learning because teachers are more focused on managing behavior than on instruction (Tillery et al., 2010).

Classroom management can be defined in simple terms as securing students' compliance to rules and procedures (Sadruddin, 2012). Oliver, Wehby, and Reschly (2011) described classroom management as a method for teaching prosocial behavior and preventing and reducing inappropriate behavior. However, T. Savage and M. Savage (2010) argued that classroom management is more than compliance and control, but rather about the teacher's ability to establish and maintain an orderly classroom environment where students' social-emotional needs and educational goals can be met. Sadruddin (2012) believed the disciplinary climate in the classroom is closely related to student learning. Consequently, teachers have to be able to deal effectively with disruptive behavior, preferably by using antecedent-based interventions. Banks (2014) recognized that the primary feature of an effective classroom management program is the use of antecedent-based interventions. The interventions involve the intentional implementation of classroom management procedures that minimize the future occurrence of problematic behaviors (Banks, 2014).

Oliver et al. (2011) expressed that managing student behavior is the area teachers request the most assistance. Likewise, Ratcliff, Jones, Costner, Savage-Davis, and Hunt (2010) surmised that classroom management was the topic most discussed by educators. Employing evidence-based strategies reduce classroom disruptions and create a more successful learning environment for both students and teachers. There are several

approaches to managing discipline in the classroom. Oliver et al. conducted an extensive examination of 81 studies to identify the "best evidence-based approaches" to classroom management (p. 12). Classroom management strategies frequently described in the literature include the assertive discipline approach (Fallon et al. 2014), behavior modification approach (Sadruddin, 2012), self-regulation approach (Menzies & Lane, 2011), and the group approach (Oliver et al., 2011).

Assertive discipline approach. The assertive discipline approach involves the teacher setting, communicating, and enforcing clearly defined expectations and consistently applying appropriate consequences for non-compliance (Bear, 2013). Assertive discipline, grounded in behavioral theory and research adheres to behaviorist practices to manage student behavior. The foundation of the assertive approach states that teachers should be able to teach without interference to instruction and students should be able to learn without hindrances due to disruptions (Charles, 2005; Canter, 2010). Strategies for the assertive approach are designed to help teachers create a more democratic learning environment rather than controlling and authoritarian.

Behavior modification approach. For the behavior modification approach, teachers manage student behavior through the use of positive and negative reinforcement. Skinner's operant conditioning theory created the foundation for behavior modification. Critics of behavior modification assume the approach concerns itself with only modifying behavior and how a behavior manifests itself in the present environment. Critics further contend that determining the cause of the behavior under behavior modification is

unimportant (Gadaire, Kelley, & DeRosa, 2010). On the contrary, understanding why a student misbehaves provides important information needed to develop appropriate interventions (Sadruddin, 2012).

Self-regulation approach. The self-regulation approach relies on the intrinsic motivation of the individual student and their capacity to reflect on and manage their behavior (Deed, 2010). Processes of the approach may involve self-motivation, self-awareness, as well as behavior. The self-regulation approach has been applied mainly to academics to enhance classroom management. Alderman and MacDonald (2015) stated that self-regulated learning can be directed toward social behaviors when managing a classroom for instruction (p. 53). Students are given the responsibility to take complete ownership for changing their behavior to meet the environmental and social demands associated with the school setting (Deed, 2010; Menzies & Lane, 2011).

Group approach. The group approach assigns contingencies based on the behaviors exhibited by each member of the group collectively (Wright & McCurdy, 2012). Since managing individualized contingencies consume valuable instructional time, Mckissick, Hawkins, Lentz, Hailley, and Mcguire (2010) suggested that assigning group contingencies were an effective way for teachers to manage disruptive behavior. Mckissick et al. (2010) also added that assigning group contingencies were more efficient because it eliminates teachers having to manage individualized contingencies based on each student's behavioral needs in the classroom.

The four classroom management approaches mentioned above are all evidence and research-based. The assertive approach is the one more closely related to the practices of the blended behavior management approach being implemented at the study site. The assertive discipline approach, developed by Lee and Marlene Canter in the 1970s, seems to align with the components of *RC* and PBIS, which advocates for consistent methods for addressing student behavior. Classroom rules and procedures are established that allow teachers to build positive and trusting relationships with students (*RC*) and to teach appropriate classroom behavior through direct instruction, modeling, practicing, and reinforcement (PBIS). The assertive discipline approach rewards appropriate behavior through positive reinforcement as a way of encouraging more of it. In turn, inappropriate behavior is redirected and negatively reinforced for students that do not comply with established rules and procedures. The concept of using reinforcements to manage behavior reflects Skinners' behavior modification theory of operant conditioning which is the theoretical basis for this study.

Classroom management has been linked to student behavior and achievement. Mitchell and Bradshaw (2013) explained that the manner in which teachers manage classroom behavior significantly impacts students' learning. The authors explained that schools have the responsibility of determining effective ways for teachers to interact with students to support their learning in a positive and safe environment. Brophy (2010) explained that creating optimal learning environments are the result of the teacher purposefully utilizing effective strategies to maintain a positive classroom climate.

Conversely, ineffective classroom management practices interfere with students' on-task learning and contribute to escalating risk for developing (Banks, 2014; Westling, 2010). Reglin et al. (2012) explained that all too often teachers were unaware of the effectiveness of the discipline and classroom management techniques they were implementing. In contrast, Parsonson (2012) and Banks (2014) agreed that at times, poor behavior management practices continue even when teachers are aware of their ineffectiveness. An ideal learning environment is where teachers can focus on instruction and student learning rather than on discipline. Implementing effective classroom management strategies enhance students' prosocial behavior and increase academic readiness (Emmer & Sabornie, 2015; Leflot, Van Lier, Onghena, & Colpin, 2010).

Professional literature supports the importance of teachers developing effective classroom management skills (Burke et al., 2011; Farkas et al., 2012; Tillery et al., 2010). Teachers experience fewer incidences of misbehavior when they are confident in their abilities to manage their classroom (Tsouloupas, Carson, & Matthews, 2014). However, some teacher programs do not adequately prepare beginning teachers with the knowledge and skill to address challenging disruptive behaviors (Banks, 2014; ED, 2014b; Tillery et al., 2010). Jones et al. (2014) stated that, "classroom management is perhaps the most underdeveloped area of teacher education" (p.19). The authors further explained that many novice teachers do not feel their classroom management skills can handle the disruptive behaviors displayed in the classroom. Parsonson (2012) expressed that managing students' classroom behavior has been the cause of daily stress for many

teachers. Moore and Hansen (2012) expressed that veteran teachers, as well as novice teachers, experience challenges with classroom management. How teachers deal with students' behavior experiences increase the likelihood that students will comply with classroom expectations and procedures and determines students' behavioral and academic outcomes (Banks, 2014; Losen, 2011; Sadruddin, 2012). The research of Banks (2014), Losen (2011), and Sadruddin (2012) indicated that teachers who use effective classroom management techniques to prevent disruptions can find their students to be more successful socially and academically.

Increasing rates of misbehavior can be related to ineffective disciplinary practices. The manner in which teachers manage the classroom can affect the frequency of disruptions to instruction (Losen, 2011; Westling, 2010). Reinke et al. (2013) stated, "teachers consider classroom management to be the most challenging aspect of their job and one in which they receive the least amount of support" (p. 39). Westling (2010) conducted a study with 70 teachers. The findings seemed to be consistent with the statement by Reinke et al. (2013). Westling found that general education and special education teachers did not feel adequately trained to manage challenging behaviors. However, Ratcliff et al. (2010) contended that teachers vary in their opinion as to what is considered effective training to manage behavior. Reinke et al. (2014) found that managing student behavior is important to teachers fulfilling their professional responsibilities, yet it is the area where teachers feel they are provided the least amount of training.

Since the research consistently demonstrates the connection between academics and behavior, teachers need the necessary skills to be able to manage the behavior in their classrooms effectively. Implementing effective classroom management strategies enhance students' prosocial behavior (Emmer & Sabornie, 2015). Empirical studies implied that using effective classroom management interventions increases students' behavior readiness and academic performance (Bank, 2014; Moore & Hansen, 2012).

Student Rewards

An educator's knowledge of instruction and classroom management is futile if the ability to motivate students is lagging. Educators must be mindful of the types of rewards used in the classroom. The term reward is often mentioned when discussing positive reinforcers. To study the effect of rewards on behavior and learning, one must first understand the concept of motivation. Experiences in the classroom impact the students' level of motivation needed to engage in the learning process (Osborne & Jones, 2011). Lai (2011) recognized that "rewards can either encourage or diminish motivation, depending on the type of rewards and the context in which they are given" (p.2).

Researchers have recognized intrinsic motivation as the motivation preferred for engaging students in the behavioral and learning process (Kohn, 1993; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Reiss (2012) described intrinsic motivation as doing something for personal satisfaction because of personal interest. Reiss' (2012) definition suggests a connection between motivation and student engagement. Guay et al. (2010), agreeing with Reiss (2012) considered motivation to be directly related to students' academic achievement

and overall success in school. The authors further explained the connection between motivation and school success by emphasizing that motivation is the "underlying reason" for the way students behaved (p. 712). However, Haywood, Kuespert, Madecky, and Nor (2008) differed in their opinion regarding the value of intrinsic motivation and its impact on school success. Haywood et al. stated, "One of the greatest barriers imaginable to social justice is the idea that motivation for achievement comes from within" (p. 18). It has been implied that rewards can be used to bring about compliance in students and the motivation to learn.

Recurring themes cited by researchers advocating for the use of rewards included: (a) rewards are part of our society and (b) students respond positively to rewards. Some schools offer tangible awards such as stickers, tokens, food, field trips, or monetary incentives to improve student engagement in learning. On the other hand, recurring themes for the conflicting view cited: (a) rewards manipulate students into compliance, (b) rewards hinder the development of intrinsic or self-managed motivation, and (c) the reward becomes desired that results in decreased motivation and low performance (Donaldson, DeLeon, Kahng, & Fisher, 2014; McKissick et al., 2010). Similar findings from a study by Rubin (2012) indicated that rewards shifted students' attention away from the learning activity and unintentionally focused it on receiving the reward. Though, Mathews et al. (2014) indicated that a decrease in "intrinsic motivation is only associated with the use of rewards when they are expected, provided only once, and not directly tied to the level of performance" (p. 174). Behavior is part of learning. Rewards

can either encourage or prevent the appropriate and inappropriate behavior. All teachers use strategies to foster compliance with on-task behavior. Nevertheless, the important issue is to know when and how to use rewards or reinforcements effectively to help students understand how their choices impacted the outcome, what they should have done differently, and what they will do the next time the situation is presented (N. Morris, personal communication, July 18, 2015).

Educators must be able to create conditions that increase the likelihood that motivation for learning will occur (Bear, 2013; Tillery et al., 2010). For educators to meet that responsibility, Bowman (2007) argued that teachers have used manipulation strategies in the form of rewards to drive students' academic performance. Rewards are often used as a preventive strategy in positive behavior programs to reinforce compliance with school and classroom rules and procedures (Tillery et al., 2010). Fryer (2011) conducted over 200 experiments in schools to study the impact of providing monetary rewards to improve student achievement. Fryer's (2011) findings indicated that the monetary incentives had zero impact on student achievement. Skinner (1953) found that people tend to repeat behaviors that have positive outcomes. Hence, the belief that behavior is a function of its consequences. In operant conditioning, a positive or negative reinforcer follows a behavior to increase the probability of the behavior. Rewards and punishments function as reinforcers either to increase the desired behavior or to decrease the likelihood of a behavior reoccurring (Mckissick et al., 2010). Hence, positive reinforcers such as rewards are used to strengthen behavior.

Behaviorists have recognized for many years the value of using rewards for successfully modifying student behavior, yet the concept remains a controversial issue. Bear (2013) mentioned that children received rewards in the form of various fruit and nuts as early as the 12th century to encourage the learning of the first five books of the Old Testament. During the 1960s and 1970s, Skinner's (1953) principles of operant conditioning and positive reinforcement became the technique widely used among teachers. Teachers who use rules with consequences or implement contracts with students for desired behaviors in exchange for rewards are engaging in the behaviorist practice of reinforcement (Groepl, 2015, para 1).

In behavior modification, rewards function as reinforcers when they cause a positive change in behavior. Groepl (2015) asserted that giving rewards as part of operant conditioning's positive reinforcement practice served as the best method for teachers desiring to increase engagement and manage student behavior. Teachers rewarded desired behavior and ignored or punished inappropriate behavior. A. Briesch, J. Briesch, and Chafouleas (2015), concurring with Greepl, noted that the use of positive reinforcement (interventions aimed at increasing appropriate behavior) is considered a more acceptable and effective strategy than the use of negative reinforcement (interventions aimed at extinguishing an inappropriate behavior).

Kohn (1993) believed differently about the use of rewards as an extrinsic motivator to foster change in student behavior. Kohn thought that offering students rewards do not develop the continued performance of desired behavior nor does it

decrease the occurrence of disruptive behavior. Bear (2013) maintained similar thoughts about the controversy surrounding rewards. The author viewed rewards as "manipulative and potentially harmful to human development" (p. 319). Others have criticized rewards and reinforcement because their use interfered with students' autonomy to manage their behavior without tangible rewards or privileges (McKissick et al., 2012). Despite the widespread use of Skinner's research on positive reinforcement, Kohn (1993) advocated for discontinuing the use of rewards because rewards manipulate student behavior rather than modify it. Nevertheless, Kohn added that even though rewards do not have a huge impact on student learning or on creating lasting change in behavior, their effectiveness as a motivational behavior management tool should not be discounted.

A suitable behavior management plan focuses on prevention. Utilizing researched-based practices helps reduce incidences of problematic behaviors by increasing the frequency of desired behaviors through positive means of reinforcement (Simonsen et al., 2012). Research has shown that positive reinforcement and punishment can be equally effective in reducing disruptive behaviors in the classroom (Donaldson et al., 2014; Oliver et al., 2011). However, supporters of behavior modification have agreed that the use of positive reinforcements are by far more effective in helping students accept responsibility for their actions while developing more socially acceptable behaviors (Donaldson et al., 2014; Simonsen, 2012). Leflot et al. (2010) conducted a one-year study with 570 second grade students to determine the effect of positive and negative contingencies on disruptive behavior. The results showed that when teachers

minimized the use of negative contingencies, students' display of disruptive behaviors decreased and on-task behavior increased. The literature indicated that rewards had an effect on students' motivation to learn, but the results were temporary.

Implementation Fidelity

Lack of implementation fidelity is the most common cause of program ineffectiveness or program failure (Century, Rudnick, & Freeman, 2010). Evidenced-based positive behavior practices have grown in popularity among schools looking to prevent disruptive behavior and improve school climate. The positive connection between implementation fidelity and measured outcomes is recognized in the literature. Coffey and Horner (2012) stated, "Using evidence-based practices with fidelity is more important than ever as schools strive to close the achievement gap" (p. 407).

Fidelity involves implementing the school-based positive behavior initiatives as designed (Benner et al., 2010). Century et al. (2010) recognized implementation fidelity as the frequency that the components of a program were performed as originally intended by the developers. Harn, Parisi, & Stoolmiller (2013) noted that measuring fidelity provides developers the evidence that the outcomes obtained in a program are related to the implementation that also impacts the program's sustainability. Evaluating a behavior program for fidelity provides evidence whether the program initiatives work as well as reveal weaknesses in the implementation. Fallon et al. (2014) pointed out that implementation fidelity can be used to monitor schoolwide positive behavior initiatives. To assess the implementation fidelity of PBA would require measuring the effectiveness

of the multitier strategies used to guide the program (Algozzine et al., 2010). Achieving a high level of fidelity (90% or higher) ensures the program initiatives linked to student behavior change are implemented as intended (Harn et al., 2013). Harn et al.'s (2013) research underlines the importance of monitoring program implementation.

Effective implementation of behavior management programs focuses on preventing problem behaviors and providing adequate support to produce behavioral gains that have a significant and sustainable effect on academic and social opportunities for all students. According to Abry et al. (2013), "programs implemented with high levels of fidelity are assigned effect sizes two to three times greater, on average, when compared to programs implemented with low levels of fidelity" (p. 440). Implementing the school's PBA initiatives with fidelity increases students' exposure to the interventions. Consequently, without adequate fidelity, it will be difficult for the PBA practices to achieve the intended outcomes (Andreou et al., 2014). Kretlow and Bartholomew (2010) emphasized providing teachers with appropriate training and follow-up support is one way to improve fidelity.

Improvements in social behavior and academics are associated with implementing positive behavior programs with fidelity (Farkas et al., 2012). Abry et al. (2013) suggested that implementing a proactive behavior model with fidelity could decrease ODRs and increase the percentage of students meeting or exceeding benchmarks on standardized tests. A study by Burke et al. (2011) examined implementation fidelity by assessing the use of a schoolwide classroom management program in eight elementary

schools. The authors' findings consistently implied that programs implemented with greater fidelity experience more positive outcomes (Burke et al., 2011; Fallon et al., 2014). Reglin, Akpo-Sanni, and Losike-Sedimo's (2012) study implied that teachers with improved classroom management skills had fewer student misbehaviors. Webster-Stratton et al. (2011), corroborating Reglin et al. (2012), found that students in classrooms with teachers trained in positive behavior do not act as aggressive toward their classmates and are more apt to cooperate with their teachers. With the appropriate training, teachers would be able to support students with challenging behaviors adequately to reduce incidences of misbehavior.

As identified in the literature, schools have experienced improved behavioral and academic outcomes as a result of receiving training in implementing positive behavior initiatives with fidelity (Farkas et al., 2012; Tillery et. al, 2011). Algozzine et al. (2010) asserted that to assess the implementation fidelity of a positive behavior program would require studying the components that guided the program. To monitor the fidelity of implementation of the critical components of PBA, the project will include formative and summative assessments.

Teacher Morale

Teachers have a moral obligation to provide all students with rigorous and high-quality instruction. Teachers who have a high regard for the profession, and can achieve satisfaction within the job experience high teacher morale. The concept of teacher morale is difficult to define and measure. Willis and Varner (2010) interpreted teacher morale as

a teacher's motivation to accomplish their personal and professional goals and their perception of satisfaction derived from aspects of the working conditions in the school environment. Statistics shows that in US public schools, 25% of new teachers do not continue beyond their third year of teaching and about 40% leave within five years (E. Skaalvik & S. Skaalvik, 2011).

While there are many factors that may contribute to teacher attrition, responding to disruptive classroom behaviors is an area where teachers struggle (Kena et al., 2014; Mckissick et al., 2010). Managing disruptive behavior is often mentioned as one of the most challenging, as well as frustrating aspects of teaching (Taylor, 2011). Often, teachers do not feel that they have the support or skills needed to deal effectively with student misbehavior. This uncertainty is often the case with preservice and novice teachers who have the least amount of classroom experience. Bambara, Goh, Kern, and Caskie (2012) agreeing with Osher et al. (2010) acknowledged that managing challenging behaviors can have a negative impact on teachers' well-being. The adverse effects of managing student misbehavior can be linked to emotional stress (Cornell & Mayer, 2010). When students engage in disruptive behavior in the classroom, it impedes the teacher's ability to teach.

Teacher morale is at an all-time low since 1989 (Metropolitan Life Insurance [MetLife] & Harris, 2013). Willis and Varner (2010) suggested a link exists between teacher morale and job satisfaction. The 2013 Survey of the American Teacher conducted by MetLife revealed that in the category of 'very satisfied' teacher job satisfaction

declined from 62% to 39%. According to the survey, teacher job satisfaction is down by 5% from the previous year (MetLife & Harris, 2013). Other findings of the report indicated that more than half of teachers (51%) reported feeling stressed on their job several days during the week. Ross et al. (2012) conducted a one-shot survey with a sample of 200 educators to understand teacher experiences with students displaying minor acts of violence and their perception of stress and burnout. The authors observed that when teachers managed challenging behaviors in the classroom with varying levels of support, it seemed to have impacted some teachers emotionally eliciting negative reactions.

Ratcliff et al.'s (2010) research focused on teacher-student interactions in the classroom. Teachers have an impact on students' behavior through the behaviors they model. Ratcliff et al.'s findings indicated in instances where teachers spent more time disciplining students and less time engaged in instruction, teachers experienced an increase in levels of frustration and burnout. Pas et al. (2011) stated that teachers' frustration with having to deal with challenging disruptive behaviors can be a factor in the increase in the number of students issued an ODR. Reglin et al. (2012) noted that, "Excessive misbehavior was a major problem in many of the nation's elementary school classrooms, and the way teachers solved this problem was important to how well students learned, performed, and achieved" (p. 5). Tsouloupas et al. (2014) considered student misbehavior a contributing factor in teacher job dissatisfaction. Hulac and Bensen (2013) reporting results of a survey stated that teachers considered acting-out behaviors as

sources of significant distress that relate to a decrease in teacher self-efficacy and burnout. Burnout is the leading cause of teachers prematurely leaving the profession (Schaefer, Long, & Clandin, 2012).

A direct link between morale and the quality of the teachers' learning and work environment has been suggested in the literature. Fisher's (2011) study revealed that one of the significant predictors of teacher burnout was student misbehavior. At WES, both teachers and parents reported disruptive student behavior as a major concern. Students that displayed extreme problem behaviors accounted for more than 50% of the ODRs (PCPS, 2014a). Allen (2010) found that when teachers have to contend with problematic behavior on a continual basis, it can destroy teacher morale. Alter et al. (2013), in agreement with Robers et al. (2013) pointed out that when managing student behavior becomes demanding, bringing about a loss of instructional time, it leads to high levels of frustration in teachers. Teachers have cited disruptive student behavior as a reason for transferring from one school to another (Burke et al., 2011), or at times, for leaving the teaching profession altogether (Fisher, 2011; Webster-Stratton et al., 2011). It has been suggested in the literature that teacher morale is directly linked to teacher performance and student behavior and achievement (Feuerborn et al., 2015).

Relevant literature on the emerged themes from the findings was obtained by performing online journal searches. Searches were conducted through Google Scholar and online education and multidisciplinary databases available through the Walden University Library. The databases included Education Research Complete, ERIC, SAGE

Premier, and Teacher Reference Center. Various combinations of the following Boolean keywords were used to search the databases: *adult learners, applied behavior, classroom management, fidelity, professional learning, student rewards,* and *morale.*

Project Description

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

The focus of the professional development project was to build capacity to train stakeholders at the local site and support their efforts to implement a blended behavior management program schoolwide with fidelity. Benner et al. (2010) acknowledged building the capacity of stakeholders to implement evidence-based interventions within the positive behavioral model with fidelity as an important variable to achieving positive and sustainable outcomes. Access to various resources and supports exist at the federal, state, district, and school levels to assist with the sustainability of positive behavior programs. Therefore, the professional development project will not require an extensive budget.

The PBIS Office of Special Education Programs website has information that is grounded in scientifically-based research related to procedures for implementing a positive behavior program. The website also contains contact information for each state's Positive Behavior Support liaison. The project that will be presented at the study site is on a topic supported on the district level. The school district funds a departmental team whose sole responsibility is to oversee the implementation of a positive behavior program at all schools. District personnel conduct off-site training sessions on a variety of

behavior programs, facilitate training and meetings for administrators and elementary and secondary school-based Positive Behavior Support coaches, and provide on-site consultation and training for school Positive Behavior Support leadership teams when requested. District resource personnel will be available to provide expert advice and support for implementing the project, in addition to providing access to web-based resources and materials on topics surrounding the implementation and evaluation of positive behavior programs.

At the school level, the administrators will be a potential resource. A one-to two page summary of the project supported by empirical research and based on best practices will be presented. Strong support for the project could be expected since the school leaders are committed to teacher improvement as well as furthering the district's goals. The administrators are accustomed to creating an annual school improvement plan (SIP) goal related to student behavior to meet the district's achievement goal of student acquisition of essential life skills (PCPS, 2014b). Articulation of the SIP goal to staff during the initial professional development session could be used to guide the implementation of the project.

As required by the school district, the study site has a designated school-based Positive Behavior Support team that handles implementing evidence-based practices to support the implementation of the school's student achievement essential life skills SIP goal. The Positive Behavior Support leadership team would more than likely be the best resource because of their interest in implementing PBA. WES' Positive Behavior Support

leadership team consists of a coach, general education and special education teachers, and resource staff which are a good representation of the school staff. The leadership team meets monthly to plan and discuss the school's PBA program (C. D. Williams [pseudonym], personal communication, November 10, 2014). The team designs and monitors the schoolwide PBA initiatives based on the needs of the students and staff. Working closely with the Positive Behavior Support team will provide access to current data. The Positive Behavior Support team also provides professional development for the staff on aspects of positive behavior and the PBA program. The Positive Behavior Support team members could be solicited to assist with the professional development presentation during the professional learning sessions. The teachers are also familiar with engaging in positive behavior activities since all instructional staff was required to receive training in *RC* by the end of the 2014-15 academic school year. Teachers at the study site have grade level common planning at least four days a week. During the common planning block is when the collaborative learning team meetings take place. It will be more convenient for all members of the grade level teams to attend the follow-up sessions if held during the collaborative learning team meetings. The follow-up sessions will assist the teachers and administrators in applying what they learned in the training sessions.

Potential Barriers and Solutions to Barriers

Three barriers associated with implementing the project that will be discussed include: (a) perception, (b) time, and (c) funding. The first barrier to implementing the

project could be staff members' beliefs and perceptions about mandated professional learning. Some staff members may dismiss the opportunity for learning about, and improvement in understanding PBA because of past professional learning experiences that failed to provide quality training and support. Educators prefer to engage in professional training that is relevant, self-directed, and connected to student outcomes (Avalos, 2011). Ensuring that the professional development training will be presented to staff in an engaging manner along with plans for providing appropriate support could be a possible solution to transform attitudes about participating in the professional development project activities. Moreover, lack of buy-in for the PBA program could also hinder implementation of the project.

Another potential barrier could be time. First to address the barrier of time, it will be necessary to present the project to school administrators and members of the Positive Behavior Support team. It could be difficult trying to coordinate a time that will be convenient for all to attend. Another issue related to time will be the school's professional learning program. The schedule is not designed for conducting multiple-day of teacher training. Therefore, implementing the project would require making adjustments to the school's professional learning plan. Traditionally, the positive behavior support team does a training of the PBA program during the staff meeting preceding the start of the school year. The positive behavior support team is allotted a set portion of time for their PBA presentation that in the past has not been enough time to produce a deep understanding of the program. A possible solution regarding time could

be to collaborate with school leaders to devise a plan that would guide the implementation of the project.

Presenting the professional development project during the Fall of the school year will require bringing the members of the Positive Behavior Support team together prior to the start of school (non-contract time). Consequently, the last potential barrier to presenting the project could be funding. The current budget situation has reduced the availability of financial resources to compensate staff for working outside of their contract. Moreover, district approval for the study was obtained on the premise that the school district would not incur any costs associated with this study. A possible solution to fund Positive Behavior Support team members could be to offer compensatory time instead of pay, with administrator approval, to reimburse positive behavior support members for their participation during non-contract time.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

Professional learning provides opportunities for educators to learn new skills and to improve their instructional practices to meet the challenges associated with district and state education reform efforts, and to address the unique needs of all learners. Given the increase in ODRs at the study site, professional development training was the logical choice for improving staff members' knowledge and understanding of implementing PBA. Guardino and Fullerton (2010) suggested proactive classroom management strategies are needed to address student behavior and improve academics. Implications

for future research may include researching in-depth other behavior management programs.

A professional development project was developed as a result of the findings of this study. The perceptions of the teacher interview participants supported a need for effective professional learning activities to improve teacher preparedness for managing challenging student behaviors in the classroom and implementing the practices with integrity. Hence, the ensuing professional development training has been designed to assist staff members, especially new and incoming teachers, in developing expertise in implementing the school's blended behavior program.

Implementing the project at the study site will require permission and support from the principal and leaders of the school's positive behavior support team. School leaders will more than likely want to ensure that the professional development topics are aligned with the school's vision and goals before committing to supporting the implementation of the project. Also, the project's discipline policies and practices should be consistent with the positive behavior support team and school district procedures.

Positive behavior is embedded into the culture of the school. The PBA program is monitored by the Positive Behavior Support leadership team on an ongoing basis. The first step in implementing the project will be to obtain permission and feedback from the school's administrative team. The project will be revised based on the feedback from the administrative team, analysis of the discipline data, and needs of the school. In the literature, researchers considered professional development programs that are presented

over a longer period to be more effective. Therefore, the project will be implemented in ongoing training sessions during the school year.

The project would consist of 3 sessions of staff development training spanning across the academic school year. The training will begin in July with the planning stage and continue through June, concluding with the evaluation stage. The training will address the schoolwide implementation of the components of PBA. The model for implementation will allow school staff, especially teachers new to PBA or who may be struggling with managing students' difficult behaviors, to have access to ongoing resources and support. Table 8 displays a timetable for implementation. The professional training will be presented to school staff using a PowerPoint. The presentation will include the purpose, goals, learning outcomes, definition of PBA, Tier 1 initiatives, along with other learning material.

Table 8

Proposed Timetable of Project Implementation

May-August Pre-implementation	• Permission to implement project obtained from principal • PD project presented to school leaders and PBS coach for feedback • School leaders and coach recruit PBS team members for summer planning • Team meets to determine staff concerns and PD training needs • Coach presents project to Positive Behavior Support team • Revise PD training, and materials based on feedback and school needs • Attend district sponsored *Behavior Clinic* (optional)
September to April Implementation	• Session 1 – Full day PD (Overview of PBA / Core features and strategies of Tier 1 universal supports, and implementation) • Subsequent full day PD training sessions held in January and April (Features of Tiers 2and 3, classroom management, and expectations for implementing PBA) • Follow-up sessions will be during collaborative learning team meetings • Review progress of implementation and modify accordingly
May to June Post-implementation	• Summative evaluation and reflection of project implementation • PBA planning for next school year • Project wrap up

Note: PBA = Positive Behavior Approach; PD = Professional Development

Roles and Responsibilities of Student and Others

The responsibility of the student as a member of the Positive Behavior Support team at the study site will be to present an overview of the project to school leaders to obtain permission to implement the project at the study site. It will be the student's responsibility to present the project to the Positive Behavior Support team, as well to gather feedback. As the developer of the project, I would work collaboratively with the Positive Behavior Support coach and team members to plan, schedule, and coordinate the professional development training, recruit and train instructors, analyze staff input from

the professional development training evaluations, develop a data system to monitor fidelity of implementation, track and analyze student discipline data, and modify the project to ensure it continued to meet the needs of students and staff.

The role of school leaders will be to guide the professional development plan by reallocating resources, ensuring connection with district policy and goals, and overseeing and enforcing staff participation in the positive behavior training and the implementation of the school's PBA initiatives. The Positive Behavior Support leadership team will assist with presenting the professional development training to staff and preparing the training materials. After the initial training session, the Positive Behavior Support grade level representative will be responsible for following up with their team members during the collaborative learning team meetings to ensure understanding of the expectations for implementing the program. Attendance will be taken at each training session. Teachers will be responsible for signing in to receive professional learning credit.

Project Evaluation Plan

Evaluation of the project will focus on the effectiveness of the professional development training. The training will be evaluated using an outcome-based method as measured by the results of the school-based performance data sources. An outcome-based evaluation compares the project results with the program goals that are set in advance (Segerholm, 2010). As a result of implementing the professional development training, the outcome should be a reduction in office referrals and an increase in achievement.

The project will provide key stakeholders at the study site with training in implementing the school's blended positive behavior program. At the study site, key stakeholders include administrators, positive behavior support team members, classroom teachers, and support staff. Stakeholders will have the opportunity to judge the value of the training and its relevance to their need to gain the necessary skills to implement PBA. After each training session, participants will be asked to complete a three-item evaluation based on a 5-point rating scale. The evaluation also includes three open-ended questions where participants will be able to provide specific information about their training experience. The evaluation will be used to determine whether the project goals have been met. In addition, the information will be used to guide the improvement of the quality of future training sessions. Results of the evaluations would also be used to provide subsequent workshop topics that are relevant. Data will be used to ensure that the delivery methods of the training are appropriate for the learners in order to continuously improve the program. A copy of the evaluation is located in Appendix A.

Evaluating the overarching outcome-based goal of the study which is the implementation of PBA will involve on-going data collection to assess the integrity of implementation and support. Data collection will include tracking incident reports, math test scores, and monitoring office referrals (Pas et al., 2011). The PBIS Office of Special Education Programs website has survey tools available for public use to assess levels of implementation such as Kincaid, Childs, and George's (2010) Benchmarks of Quality survey. The effectiveness of the PBA program and the professional development project

will be determined by a reduction in the number of incidences of students' disruptive behavior by the end of the school year as measured by the ODR data and standardized math test scores. Spaulding et al. (2010) emphasized that "ODRs can be used as outcome measures of behavioral and academic interventions" (p. 70). A reduction in the number of ODRs will be linked to the school district's reduction goal. The school district tracks discipline data to determine the effectiveness of behavior management programs. Currently, schools are charged with reducing ODRs by a minimum of 10%. Utilizing student discipline data will allow the Positive Behavior Support team to monitor the progress of the PBA program to make changes to the existing program.

Data from the evaluations will determine whether the training was beneficial in meeting stakeholders' individual needs. Data, where appropriate, will be analyzed and shared monthly or quarterly with school leaders and the Positive Behavior Support team. Adjustments will be made to the way staff implement PBA based on the data and identified systemic needs and concerns. The school's ability to measure the behavior of students, and how that may affect student achievement, is an essential part of the project. Providing training to staff in the use of effective strategies to handle disruptive and challenging behaviors increases the likelihood of creating an optimum learning environment leading to possible social change.

Project Implications

Possible Social Change

The primary mission of a school is to raise students' levels of academic achievement. However, schools also play an important role in helping students to acquire and strengthen their social and emotional skills (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). Implementing a blended positive behavior management program with fidelity to address the behavioral areas of students' lives contributes to a safer learning and teaching environment. Offering professional development on implementing a blended behavior management approach allows school staff to deliver effective interventions that may positively affect the academic and behavioral needs of students to enhance learning, and facilitate a positive school climate. The basis of positive behavior is to improve the lives of students (Cook et al., 2012). This proactive approach enhances the capacity of schools to design effective multilevel prevention strategies to create environments that promote the social-emotional well-being of all students, as well as promote academic success.

Implicit in any professional training is the expectation of change (Cafferelli & Daffron, 2013). This professional development project has the capability to improve both professional practice and student performance. The project is designed to bring about individual and organizational change in students and staff when the program initiatives are used to implement the program with integrity. PBA seeks to apply behavioral principles to reduce problem behaviors and build appropriate behaviors that result in sustainable change and improved lifestyle. The recommended professional development

training resulting from archival discipline and standardized math data, along with teachers' perceptions can increase the capacity of the staff to manage students' challenging behaviors.

The training offered through the professional development project can lead to positive social change by providing critical information to stakeholders for reducing students' disruptive behaviors, thus causing an improvement in behavior and academic outcomes. Implementation of the project will allow teachers to develop their behavior management skills that can be used to improve classroom management. As a result, students at the study site will benefit from an improved classroom climate and learning experience. The project was intended to meet the needs of a single study site; however, the extensiveness of the professional development training and its contents will allow for modification by other school leaders as well.

Local Stakeholders

Implementing a positive behavior management program is mandated by the local district to allow its schools to create environments that promote appropriate behavior for all students. The positive behavior professional training was developed for WES, a suburban elementary school that was implementing a blended behavior management program. The project resulted from data that indicated a lack of understanding existed among staff regarding implementing the school's blended approach and the need for training to improve practices for managing challenging behaviors.

The project is designed with the notion that engaging staff in professional development positive behavior activities would improve teachers' knowledge of the philosophy and practices of PBA. The staff could also gain a better understanding of the multitiered program to assist with continued implementation with fidelity. Also, WES' staff would gain skills and be equipped with tools to manage student behavior to create a classroom and school environment conducive to supporting the learning of all students. Empirical studies support the notion that when students consider their school environment to be caring and supportive, they are more likely to respond favorably to positive discipline practices (Bear, 2012; Bradshaw et al., 2010).

Larger Context

The U.S. population has become increasingly more diverse and globally-minded which impacts public education (Ford, Stuart & Vakil, 2014; Stufft & Brogadir, 2010). With the trend in changing demographics, teachers are increasingly expected to accommodate students whose disruptive behavior impedes their learning and the learning of others. Disruptive student behavior is a problem affecting the schools across the nation. In the larger context, teachers who are trained to manage their classrooms effectively are more likely to increase student engagement and improve the possibilities of behavior and academic success. Increasing time on instruction and teaching acceptable behavior can contribute to achieving socially significant behavior changes by increasing the opportunity for students to graduate from high school. Improved high school retention

and graduation rates can add to students' future prospects and quality of life. Greater opportunities can result in more positive contributions to the community and society.

Conclusion

Section 3 provided a detailed explanation of aspects related to the project. The purpose of the project is to produce an artifact from one of the four genres to address an increase in ODRs and a decline in math scores at the local site. Topics were aimed at describing professional development as a suitable genre for WES' staff to improve their performance and skills in the area of behavior management. The reviewed literature indicated that effective professional development training can improve staff members' ability to teach and implement positive behavior with fidelity, and to provide more comprehensive student support as needed. The completed project is displayed in Appendix A.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to investigate the connections between a blended behavior management program, and student behavior and academic achievement, and staff perceptions about their experience with implementing the program with fidelity. A professional development project was developed based on the results of the study that would provide staff members' training in implementing the PBA program with fidelity and in learning new strategies to assist with managing challenging behaviors. In Section 3, the project was analyzed through a comprehensive review of professional literature, and a proposal for implementing and evaluating the project was presented.

Section 4 provides a reflective analysis of the doctoral study. Topics discussed include an evaluation of the project strengths in addressing the problem and recommendations for remediation of the limitations. In section 4, I also discuss insights about what I learned during this doctoral journey such as personal growth as a practitioner-scholar, implications for the study to create social change, and prospects for future research.

Project Strengths and Limitations

The project is designed to increase stakeholders' knowledge and understanding about the implementation of the school's blended behavior management program. Results from the interviews revealed that teachers experienced difficulty with implementing the PBA initiatives with fidelity due to concerns about a need for systemic change to the

program and a need for behavior management training for staff members to support all students. In this section, I will discuss the project's strengths and limitations in addressing the local problem.

Strengths

There are three strengths of this professional development project. The primary strength of the project is that it provides comprehensive multitier intervention strategies to staff members to address the local problem of managing disruptive student behavior. The project is designed to provide key stakeholders with evidence-based behavior strategies to advance their understanding of effective behavior management needed to implement the school's positive behavior program. Effectively implementing the school's behavior program initiatives will contribute to improving student behavior and achievement to create an orderly learning environment. The strategies will be used by staff members to support prosocial behavior in the classroom and other common areas on the school campus.

Secondly, the project is designed to be presented on-site to a large group. A three-tiered framework was followed to design the project based on the needs revealed by the findings. Multilevel positive behavior programs are widely used (Bradshaw, 2012). Following the traditional positive behavior supports model allows the project and presentation materials to be adapted by other schools in other settings implementing a traditional or blended positive approach.

The final strength to be discussed is the evaluation process. The evaluation process allows staff members to provide their reaction to the outcome of the training. Participants have the opportunity to share their views about the training and also whether the training was beneficial to their professional growth. The evaluation information can be used to guide improvement efforts of future professional development.

Limitations

There are two limitations associated with the project. A limitation of the project is that the professional development training was prepared based on past data to meet the needs of a single site. Moreover, a comprehensive needs assessment was not conducted with the entire staff to identify areas of concern before developing the professional development training. The plan for the training was influenced by the responses of the small group of interview participants. Identifying the needs of the staff ensures relevancy of the professional development training. According to Guskey and Yoon (2009), quality professional development begins with a needs assessment. A possible recommendation to remediate the limitation mentioned above is to conduct a needs assessment with the entire staff as part of the preimplementation activities by examining school-based data sources to identify gaps and to prioritize the needs.

Another limitation of the project is that the professional development sessions are designed to provide staff members with an overview of the PBA program. For staff members to learn specific classroom management strategies to handle extreme difficult behaviors, it may require additional training beyond what this project is offering.

Teachers have the opportunity to pursue their learning through district training and resources, school-based workshops, and by collaborating with colleagues.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

Addressing the problem of disruptive behavior and declining math achievement in a way other than implementing PBA is possible by utilizing another tiered intervention system. Research supports the success of tiered models for reducing ODRs and improving student performance (Bradshaw et al., 2010). An approach that integrates behavior and academics is required to address the local problem. Two programs to consider are Response to Intervention (RtI) or Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). A common element shared among RtI, MTSS, and the current approach, PBA is that the models utilize a three-tiered system to describe the level of the interventions delivered across a continuum.

The RtI model received recognition in 2004 during the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Education Act as an early identification and prevention program for reading and behavior problems (D. Fuchs & L. Fuchs, 2006). As defined by the National Center on Response to Intervention (2010), "RtI integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavioral problems" (p. 1). RtI utilizes a problem-solving approach. Students are provided academic, behavioral, social, or emotional supports and services as needed. The RtI process begins with identifying low performing students, monitoring student progress, providing evidence-based interventions, and then, based on

student response, modifying the intensity of the interventions (D. Fuchs, L. Fuchs, & Compton, 2012).

RtI and MTSS share similar concepts which accounts for the terms being used interchangeably among educators. Though, it has been argued that MTSS is more comprehensive than RtI. Similar to RtI, MTSS uses evidence-based tiered interventions to improve the learning outcomes for all students. Colorado Department of Education (2015) defined MTSS as a school-wide, data-driven, prevention-based framework that uses data-based decision making to meet the instructional and behavioral needs of students and professional needs of school-based and district personnel. While the research indicates the effectiveness of positive behavior programs, there are no data to support one model over another for reducing ODRs or improving student achievement. However, the philosophical and practical foundations of each model acknowledges that to address the local problem by improving the learning environment, structures must be in place for both behavioral expectations and instructional practices.

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

Scholarship

As a practitioner-scholar, I was able to engage in research that deepened my knowledge of positive behavior which I was then able to transfer to my classroom. The acquired knowledge has also been used to make connections with colleagues to improve the school environment. When I began the journey into the doctoral program, I experienced a level of anxiety about the pending project study. I was overwhelmed by the

extent of the process. During the coursework, I was given relevant assignments where I was exposed to practical resources that I was able to use throughout the project study process. As my experiences in the courses increased so did my confidence as a researcher. Conducting research on the school's approach to managing student behavior resulted in an increased awareness of the extent that the blended program initiatives needed to be implemented according to the established plan.

While I began the project study thinking I would be conducting a quantitative research study, of which I was most comfortable, I conducted a mixed methods study instead. As a scholar, I most enjoyed the experiences associated with conducting the Friedman and repeated-measures ANOVA inferential tests. My acquired knowledge of quantitative and qualitative methodologies and the ability to critically analyze the research of others resulted in this mixed methods project study. During the process of reviewing the literature, I broadened my knowledge and understanding of implementing a blended positive behavior program.

Project Development

At first, developing the project presented a challenge. Creating professional development training opportunities were not part of my regular teacher responsibilities. The role of project developer provided the chance to contribute to a real world topic in the education field that impacts student academic success. Exploring positive behavior management in an authentic context demonstrates the ability to contribute new insights to

impact colleagues' professional practice (modeling and mentoring), student achievement, and the community.

Reflecting on the research and applying the content to the study site helped in investigating the local problem, gathering and analyzing the data, and developing the project. In addition, I was able to converse with colleagues about an issue of concern to the study site. Project goals were developed from an analysis of the findings. To ensure the credibility of this project study, my personal biases had to be eliminated. Conducting the study and organizing the project has contributed to shaping my outlook on inquiry, as well as the transformative implications of professional learning. The outcome of the project study was a 3 day professional development training model intended to provide stakeholders with the depth of understanding of the essential components needed to implement the school's blended behavior management program.

Leadership and Change

Being a teacher leader involves influencing change. Leaders, furthermore, play a major role for improving the quality of teaching and learning in the context of their school (Radinger, 2014). Clarke (2013), citing Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009), stated:

> Teacher leaders are educators who lead within and outside of the classroom; identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners; and that influence others in the continued improvement of educational practice. (p. 1223)

My interest in knowing about and understanding the tenets of positive behavior was precipitated by my informal leadership role as a member of the school's positive behavior

support team. The competencies obtained while developing this project have been used to further support the implementation of PBA. Each piece of the project was thoroughly researched and designed to foster a safe and positive learning environment for students and staff. The project was developed to place emphasis on reducing disruptive discipline problems and increasing the time on instruction by offering training for staff members at the study site. Pursuing lifelong learning has opened up opportunities for effecting positive change. Roffey (2015) describes an agent of change as someone who purposefully causes social, cultural, or behavioral change.

The project is a result of my roles as practitioner-scholar and project developer. By conducting this study, I discovered a new world of information not only about behavioral management programs but also about my attitudes and assumptions about student behavior—something I may not have discovered without research. The lessons I have learned while carrying out the abovementioned roles are interconnected with my professional and personal life. I discovered that strategies used to develop the training were not much different from those used in my classroom. For example, I learned that it is just as important to provide a challenge to the adult learner without causing frustration as with younger students. Life's lessons learned from the doctoral experiences are ever present in the character of who I have become as a practitioner-scholar.

Reflection on the Importance of this Work

The research literature for PBIS is extensive but somewhat limited for RC. Currently, no empirical studies exist that have investigated the effectiveness of a behavior

management program that blends PBIS and RC. For teachers to teach and students to learn, the school must be a safe educational environment (Cornell & Mayer, 2010; Osher et al., 2010). While education and research continue to evolve and the challenge of teaching students becomes more demanding, professional learning to build knowledge is essential. The professional development project in this study is intended to help teachers improve their understanding of behavior management by applying the knowledge and skills necessary to create an environment for learning.

This project study is important because the on-site professional development specifically addresses the need for professional training in implementing PBA based on teacher perspectives in context for the study site. Secondly, this project study connects theory to practice. And lastly, this work builds staff capacity by providing support and behavioral strategies that enable key stakeholders to better manage disruptive behaviors. Kose and Lim (2011) linked professional learning to improved teaching, program implementation, and student achievement (p. 197). This study has the potential to contribute to the current research of a blended behavioral management approach and its association with creating a positive and more orderly learning environment.

The Project's Potential Impact on Social Change

The potential impact of this project includes improved student achievement as a result of improved behavior management. Additionally, this study has the potential to contribute to the current research of implementing a blended behavior management approach and its association with creating a positive and more orderly learning

environment. This study will be beneficial by providing school leaders and behavior leadership teams with teachers' insights on the effectiveness of integrating PBIS and RC, and the effectiveness of its behavior management practices. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2001) stated:

> A legitimate and essential purpose of professional development is the development of an inquiry stance on teaching that is critical and transformative, a stance linked not only to high standards for the learning of all students but also to social change and social justice and to the individual collective professional growth of teachers. (p.46)

This study has the potential to contribute to the current research of a blended behavioral management approach and its association with creating a positive and more orderly learning environment.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Public school students in the United States missed approximately 18 million days of instruction in the 2011-12 school year due to exclusionary discipline practices (US ED, 2012). The Department of Education went on to report that almost 6 out of 10 students are suspended or expelled at least once during their middle and high school years. In 2012 in the local and surrounding districts, over 6000 kindergarten through fifth grade elementary students were suspended or excluded from the classroom setting for disruptive type behavior (St. George, 2012). Simonsen et al. (2012) emphasized that punitive and exclusionary discipline practices have yet to demonstrate improvements in

student behavior or increases in making schools safer. Also, national and state data have shown disproportionality in the rates of punitive consequences for minority students. Office discipline referrals (ODRs) for Black students are more likely to be two to four times greater than for White students across all grade levels (Boneshefski & Runge, 2014; Skiba et al., 2011). Racial disparities in school discipline, among other factors, are believed to contribute to the persistent achievement gap (Gregory et al., 2010). At the study site, Black students experienced higher suspension and reassignment rates than all other students. PBA initiatives are designed to provide students with instruction in acceptable social and behavior skills. When implemented with fidelity, the blended behavior management program should improve the discipline gap between Black and White students (Bradshaw et al., 2010).

The current study generated discussions among staff at the local site about best practices for curtailing disruptive behavior to give attention to achievement and school climate. Several additional areas of research and exploration can be built upon the findings of this study. Identifying the most prevalent challenging behaviors has the potential to impact the development of focused interventions to address students' challenging behaviors. A follow-up study could be conducted to determine further the effect of the interventions.

Several factors can contribute to an increase in disruptive student behavior. Future studies could investigate the effectiveness of the school's PBA initiatives across variables such as grade-level and socioeconomic status. In addition, the effectiveness of implementation of PBA could be examined to determine its impact on modifying specific problem behaviors and reasons for teachers writing an ODR. It would be interesting to

determine whether all behaviors were dealt with equally, or if certain behaviors were affected more than others. Lastly, since parents as well as teachers expressed concern about the increase in disruptive behavior, future research could be conducted to obtain parents' perceptions of the effectiveness of the implementation of the PBA initiatives to reduce disruptive behavior.

Conclusion

This study focused on investigating the connections between a blended behavior management program and behavior and academic achievement, as well as staff perceptions about their experience with implementing the program, and the degree to which the practices were implemented with fidelity. A goal of the professional development training was to clarify the expectations for all staff regarding implementation of the school's PBA practices, as well as present research for implementing blended behavior management program initiatives. Another goal of the project was to provide staff with strategies to manage challenging behaviors to create classroom environments conducive to learning.

Providing behavior support is connected to the broader concern for improving academic success. Research has shown that safer schools lead to more productive learning environments (Sklad et al., 2012). To safeguard all students' learning opportunities, school reform and accountability systems brought on by NCLB were put into place (Dee & Jacob, 2011). The issue that prompted the study is the concern that a behavioral management program designed to foster a positive schoolwide climate was no longer meeting school needs, resulting in excessive behavioral disruptions to classroom

instruction and declining math achievement. Positive approaches emphasize an ethical standard that restricts the use of aversive techniques. PBA encourages teachers to be proactive and positive rather than reactive and negative with regards to behavior management strategies (Allen, 2010).

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Appendix A: Professional Development Project

Understanding and Implementing the Positive Behavior Approach

Purpose: Given the increase in ODRs and the decline in math achievement during the study period, the purpose of the project is to provide three sessions of professional development training on topics supporting the implementation of the school's blended behavior management program. The professional development was designed based on data derived from the experiences and needs of the staff. Additionally, the professional development training reflects best practices and incorporates knowledge of how adults learn.

Goals: To assist the WES staff in their efforts to implement PBA to provide effective positive behavior support for all students by:

- Clarifying the expectations for all staff regarding implementation of the school's PBA practices
- Presenting current research regarding best practices for implementing the blended behavior program initiatives
- Engaging staff in relevant training on evidenced-based strategies to manage challenging behaviors to create classroom environments conducive for learning
- Increasing staff buy-in

Training Learning Outcomes: At the end of the three training sessions, participants should know, be able to do, or leave with:

- Clear understanding of the school's vision for positive behavior
- Increased knowledge of blended behavior management
- Develop ways to improve the systematic process of implementing PBA
- Acquire tools and strategies to improve classroom management skills
- Identify challenging behaviors and respond with the appropriate behavior management strategy

Audience: The intended audience is the instructional and support staff members of an elementary school. The targeted group included all staff members who provided support to students in an instructional or guidance capacity.

On-site Professional Development Training Plan

Time	**Session 1** September	**Session 2** January	**Session 3** April
8:00-8:30	Introduction Activity	Opening Activity	Opening Activity
8:30- 9:00	What is Positive Behavior	Review of learning Session 1	Review of learning Session 2
9:00-10:15	Overview of PBA	Tier 2 processes and interventions	Tier 3 Processes and Interventions
10:15-10:30	**Break**	**Break**	**Break**
10:30-11:00	Continuum of supports	Review office discipline data	Review office discipline data
11:00-12:00	Tier 1 processes and interventions	Relationship building strategies *Video*	What is working? What is not yet working?
12:00-1:00	**Lunch**	**Lunch**	**Lunch**
1:00-2:15	Establishing procedures, rules and expectations *Online training*	Classroom management strategies *Rotations* *Role Play*	Sustainability in common areas
2:15-2:30	**Break**	**Break**	**Break**
2:30-3:15	Expectations for implementing PBA Wrap up	Continued implementation *Discussion* Wrap up	School Self-assessment Guide *Questionnaire* Wrap up
3:15-3:30	Evaluation	Evaluation	Evaluation *Video*

Professional Training Evaluation

For each item, use the rating scale to select the appropriate response.

1 – Strongly Disagree
2 – Disagree
3 – Neutral
4 – Agree
5 – Strongly Agree

Rate the training on the following items:	**Rating Scale**				
	S D	**D**	**N**	**A**	**S A**
Quality of the training:					
Content useful and relevant	1	2	3	4	5
Well planned and interactive	1	2	3	4	5
Effective use of materials (technology, handouts, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Time sufficient to allow learning and practicing of new concepts	1	2	3	4	5
To what extent did the presenters:					
Know the topic	1	2	3	4	5
Encourage participation and collegial professional exchange	1	2	3	4	5
Provide an appropriate level of support	1	2	3	4	5
Respect knowledge and professional experience of adult learners	1	2	3	4	5
As a result of the training:					
Gained new information about the topic	1	2	3	4	5
Session content and strategies useful to my professional development	1	2	3	4	5
Adapted and modified from (FormGet, 2015; Survey Monkey, 2015)					

1. What is the most significant thing you learned today?
2. What support do you need to implement what you learned?
3. How can we build on this session for follow-up learning?

Project Facilitator Guide

I. Purpose of Guide – Provide ideas for preparing training and evaluation resources for adult learners. This guide focuses on providing training on the implementation of a blended positive behavior program.

II. Preparation – Identify audience, group needs, purpose, goals, outcomes, and develop training content
- Audience – Stakeholders at the study site
- Group needs – Training on components of PBA
- Purpose – To provide training on topics related to the implementation of PBA
- Goals and Outcomes – Listed above
- Content – See PowerPoint slides

III. Delivery Techniques – The professional development training was designed to meet the characteristics associated with adult learners. Adult learning principles included:
- Discussions
- Small and large group activities
- Cooperative learning structures (Think-Pair-Share, Rally Robin, Jigsaw)
- Collaborative practice
- Active learning (Role plays)
- Self-reflection
- Idea lists/Parking lot
- Evaluation

The research indicated that the aforementioned adult learning techniques lead to better transfer of learning and that can lead to change in practice (O'Toole & Essex, 2012). Introduction into the topic was achieved by providing an article for participants to read prior to the training session: *What is PBIS?*

IV. District Strategic Behavior Goals –
- Implement and sustain an effective positive behavior program
- Promote social/emotional skills
- Student discipline data will reflect a percentage decrease in the number of students receiving ODRs by the end of the school year

V. Presentation Components
- Prepare presentation PowerPoint
    - Plan opening activity for each session
    - Present plan for success

- Provide overview of school's behavior management program
    - Define behavioral approach
    - Identify and address program challenges
- Include all handouts and links to videos
- Adapt PowerPoint slides to school setting

VI. Notes for PowerPoint Slides

Slide 1 – **Begin Session 1**

Slide 2 – Purpose of Project

Slide 3 – Training Outcomes

- Outlines what participants should know, be able to do, or able to leave with at the end of the three training sessions

Slide 4 – Session 1 Agenda

- Establish agenda for the training
- Sample "Get to know you" activity: (1) Write name on a card, (2) While music plays, touch 5 chairs not at original table, (3)When music stops, Hand up - Pair up, (4) Introductions, (5) Trade cards, and (6) Repeat 2 times. Each time introduce name on new card. Last round – Share out. Check for consistency of information shared.

Slide 5 – Formula for Success

- Our goal in education is to improve student outcomes with efficiency and effectiveness.
- This graphic highlights explicitly the "how" to do this. If we utilize effective interventions (what) and implement them with fidelity using effective implementation methods (how), we will establish significant outcomes (why). Formula for Success adapted from Fixsen, D., & Blase, K. (2012). National Research Implementation Network

Slide 6 – Definition of Positive Behavior

- Positive behavior support is a behavior management system used to understand what maintains a student's challenging behavior. Inappropriate behavior is sometimes difficult to change because it serves a purpose. Behaviors are supported by reinforcement.
- Discuss idea list: What is PBIS? http://www.sjusd.org/student-services/discipline/

- Slide 7 – Four Goals of Misbehavior
- Why students misbehave: (1) Attention from peers or adults, (2) Attain power or control, (3) Revenge or retaliation, (4) Avoidance of failure
- Read article: Jigsaw cooperative learning technique

Slides 8-9 – Definition of PBA

Slide 10 – PBIS

- PBIS is a research-based, school-wide systems approach to improve school climate. It is not a curriculum, rather a process which focuses on improving a school's ability to teach expectations and support positive behavior for all students. It can be incorporated into each individual classroom's behavior management system as well to allow for consistency throughout the school and across grade levels. It focuses on appropriate behaviors, but also has a plan in place to deal with inappropriate behaviors. Data are recorded and analyzed to aid in making decisions as to what needs to be focused on in regards to behavior.

Slide 11 – Responsive Classroom

- Responsive Classroom is a research-based approach to education that is associated with greater teacher effectiveness, higher student achievement, and improved school climate.
- Seven key principles of RC - 1. Social and emotional curriculum is as important as the academic curriculum. 2. How children learn is as important as what they learn. 3. Cognitive growth occurs through social interaction. 4. Students need to learn a set of social and emotional skills. 5. Knowing the students we teach is as important as knowing the content. 6. Knowing the families is as important as knowing the students. 7. Teamwork is as important as individual competence.
- Components of RC integrated into PBA - Daily Morning Meeting and Closing Circles, "Take a Break", Teacher Language, and Logical Consequences.
- Video: What is RC? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mhV6AcBxeBc

Slides 12-14 – About the Positive Behavior Approach (PBA)

- Description and characteristics of PBA – A combination of positive behavior interventions selected from evidence-based practices such as PBIS, Responsive Classroom, and the Olweus Bully Prevention Program that actively teach and promote the acquisition of essential life skills.

Slide 15 – Social/Emotional Learning

- Social/Emotional Learning: (1) Self-awareness: Teaches personal awareness and reflection in students. (2) Self-Management: Teaches how to regulate and manage their emotions. (3) Social awareness: Teaches about empathy for others and diversity. (4) Relationship Skills: Teaches how to work cooperatively with peers and build conflict resolution skills. 5) Responsible decision making: Teaches students to be reflective and the steps to resolve an issue.

Slide 16 – Brainstorming Activity

- Describe multi-level behavior strategies
- Discussion using the Think-Pair-Share cooperative structure
- Data are used to determine the level of support for each student.

Slide 17 – Continuum of Supports

- Tier 1 (Green) represents the majority of students. Students receive social/emotional instruction through various delivery systems, such as, morning meetings, bullying prevention, and the 2nd step lessons. Tier 2 (yellow) supports are for students who may need additional support from a counselor or some form of targeted behavior intervention. Tier 3 (red) supports for students who require a more intensive response to improve their behavior that is done through local screening or a child study.

Slide 18 – Classroom Management

- Review how the supports make up the framework
- Online training course – Four modules designed to assist elementary teachers address behavior problems in an effective manner.
- Module One is *Establishing Classroom Rules*. All modules include a short pre-test and a post-test. Discuss results with members at your table. Share out to group.

Slide 19 – Overview of Tutorial

- Overview of 10 Tips for establishing classroom rules and procedures from the online training. Turn and talk in teams. Provide time for teams to discuss next steps for creating rules.

Slide 20 – Teaching Matrix

- Matrix for teaching behavior expectations. Describes schoolwide expectations for common areas on the campus: hallways, bathroom, café', bus, classroom, recess

Slide 21 – Universal Behavior Management (Tier 1)

- Hierarchy of Consequences: Outlines the appropriate steps to assist teachers in managing student behavior in the classroom.

Slide 22 – Student Behavior Management Process

- Flowchart: Outlines process for managing behavior

Slides 23-24 – **Begin Session 2**

- Purpose
- Agenda

Slides 25-26 – proactive behavior strategies

- Brainstorming Activity (proactive behavior strategies)
- Discussion using the Table Rally cooperative structure – Compile a list of proactive behavior strategies. Share out to group

Slides 27-28 – Data

- Behavior outcome goal: ODR data will reflect a 10% decrease in the number of students receiving ODRs by the end of the school year
- Matched academic data
- Insert slides with appropriate school data

Slide 29 – Relationships

- Relationships matter. Watch Rita Pierson video. Present research. Discuss wonderings...
- Excerpts from ASCD article: Primary strategy to show you care: Show an interest in students' personal lives
- Educator's Guide to Preventing and Solving Discipline Problems
- *by Mark Boynton and Christine Boynton* – Creating a welcoming environment: (1) Greet the students by the door as they enter the classroom, (2) Watch for and touch base with students who may display strong emotion or having difficult day, (3) Sincerely listen to students, (4) Empathize with students

- Maintain high expectations

Slide 30 – Behavior Management Strategies

- Three rotations for learning behavior management strategies –
- 123 Magic (research-based techniques to stop unwanted behaviors. 123 Magic provides practical methods for eliminating disruptive behavior and encouraging on task work habits.
- Second Step - Second Step lessons designed to nurture social and emotional awareness which decreases problem behaviors and increases student success. Lessons promote self-regulation, safety, and support.
- Olweus Bullying Circle – Role play to teach how to handle a bullying situation. Complete training evaluation

Slides 31-32 – Begin Session 3

- Purpose
- Agenda

Slides 33-37 – Expectations for Common Areas

- Sustainability

Slide 38 – Assessment

- To use data for decision-making we need to engage in progress monitoring that provides access to the right type of current data, a process for using those data, and strategies for using those during the decision-making process
- Self-assessment Guide
- Determines the extent of the level that PBA has been implemented.
- Assessment will be completed by each grade level and specialist team.
- Assessment has 6 components.

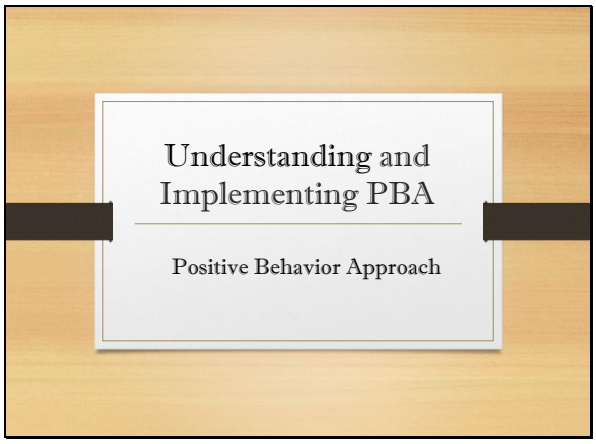
Slide 39 – Wrap Up

- Use video to motivate staff
- Rita Pierson Video - Every Kid Needs a Champion
- The late Rita Pierson, a teacher for 40 years, once heard a colleague say, "They don't pay me to like the kids." Her response: "Kids don't learn from people they don't like.” A call to educators to believe in their students and connect with them on a real, human, personal level.
- Complete training evaluation

VII. Resources

- Article – What Is PBIS?
  http://www.sjusd.org/student-services/discipline/What_is_PBIS.pdf
- Article – Four Goals for Misbehavior
  http://www.lake.k12.fl.us/cms/lib05/FL01000799/Centricity/Domain/41/Teacher%20Assistant%20PD%20Day/TA%20PD%20DAY%202015/4%20Goals%20of%20Misbehavior.pdf
- Online Tutorial – Classroom Management
  http://www.calstat.org/classroom/index.html
- Rita Pierson Video: Building Strong Relationships
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2CDCBPmhN8
- Rita Pierson Video: Every Kid Needs a Champion
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFnMTHhKdkw
- PBA Training PowerPoint available upon request

Slide 1



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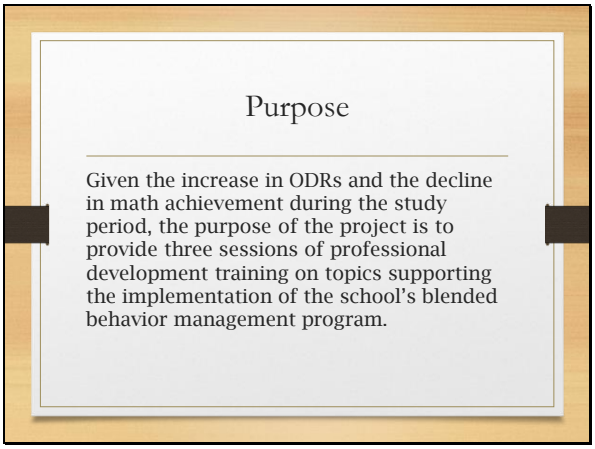
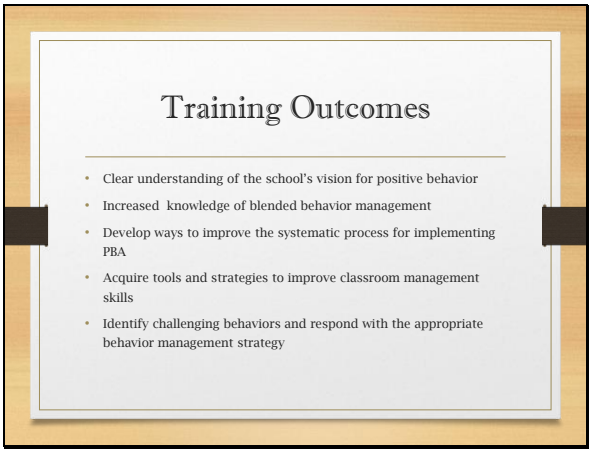
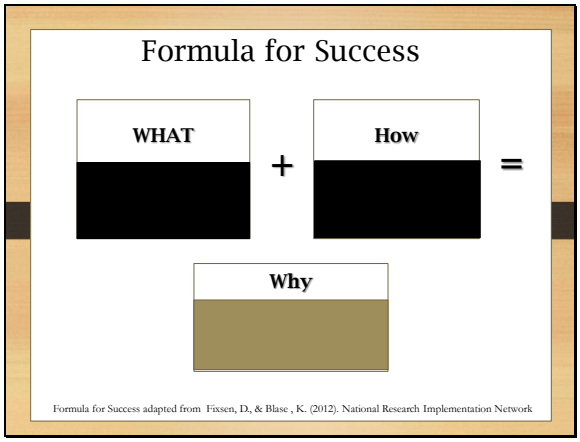


Slide 3



Slide 4

Slide 5



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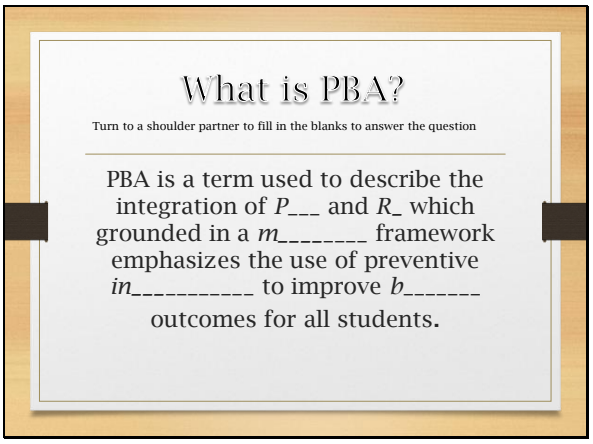

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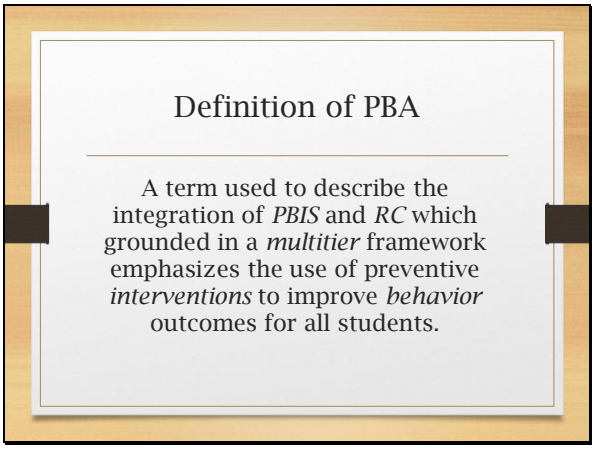

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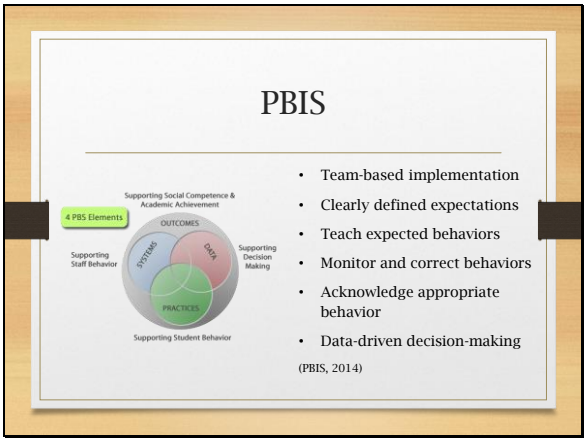


Slide 11

Responsive Classroom

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mhV6AcBxeBc

- How children learn is important
- Cognitive growth from social interaction
- Social and emotional skills taught
- Foster positive relationships
- Connect with families
- Teamwork

(NEFC, 2014)

Slide 12

Overview of PBA

PBIS + Responsive Classroom = PBA

- Research and evidence-based practices
- Implemented schoolwide
- Problem solving framework
- Provides continuum of supports to reduce disruptive behavior and create an environment for learning

(Adapted from PBA Updates, 2013)

Slide 13

About Our Program

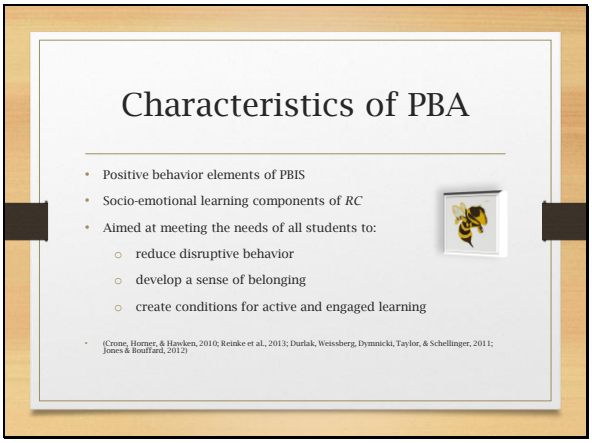
(Adapted from School PBA Resources, 2013)

A combination of social/emotional learning programs from evidence-based practices

Goals

Teach social/emotional skills
Build positive relationships
Create a safe learning environment
Promote positive behavior
Build Community

Slide 14



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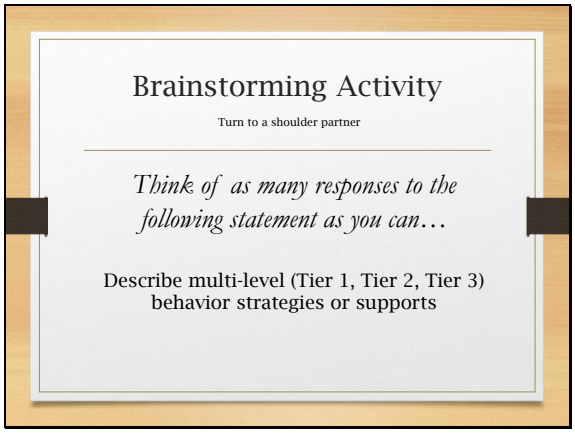

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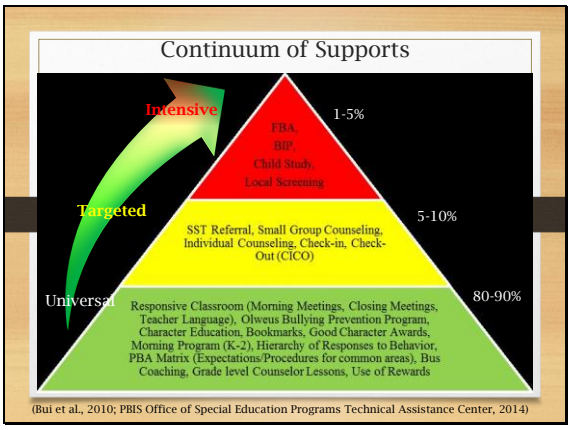

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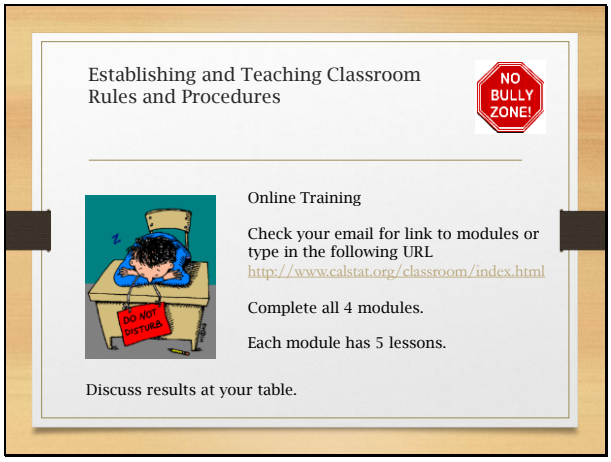

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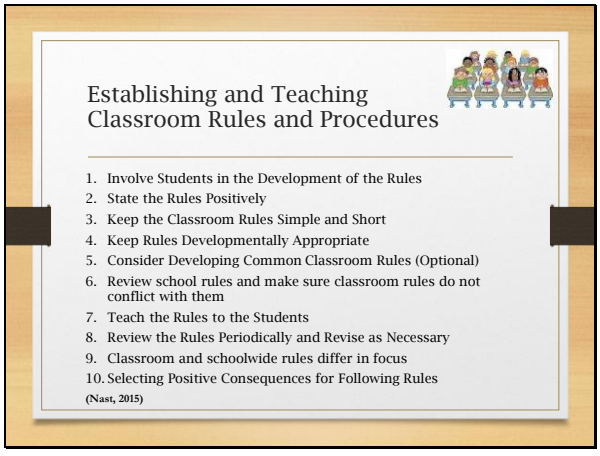

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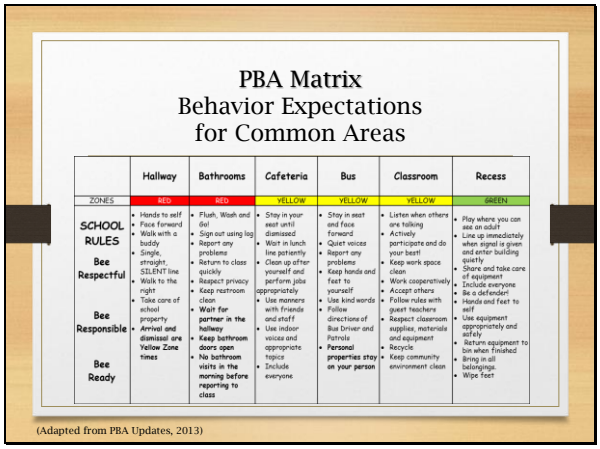

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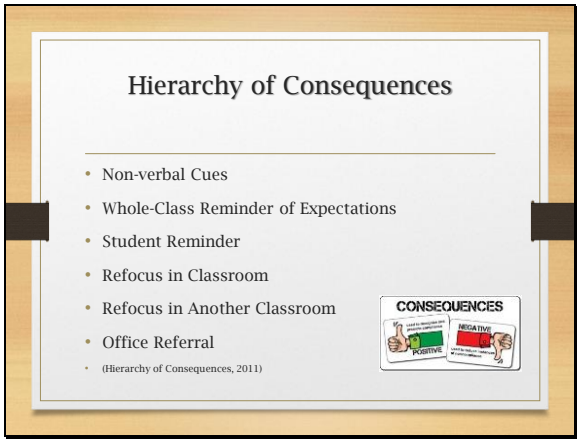

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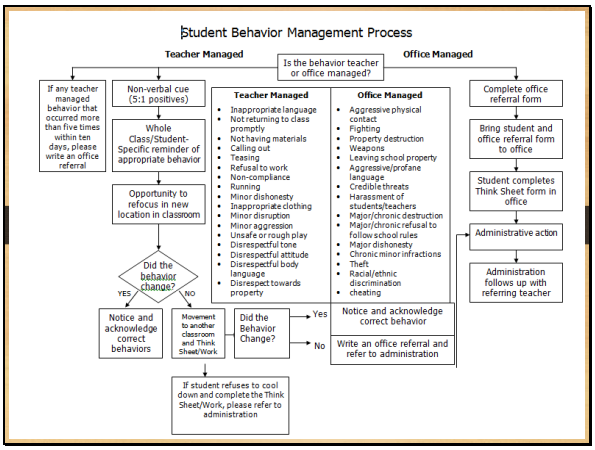


Slide 23

Session 2 – Purpose

This session provides a workshop for school staff to further develop foundations of PBA to build on the previous training. Descriptions and multiple examples of the various components will be provided.

Slide 24

Session 2 Agenda

Lunch on your own ~

- Welcome and Opening Activity
- Tier 2 Strategies
- Discipline Data
- Building Positive Relationships
- Effective Behavior Management Strategies
- Evaluation

Lunch on your own ~

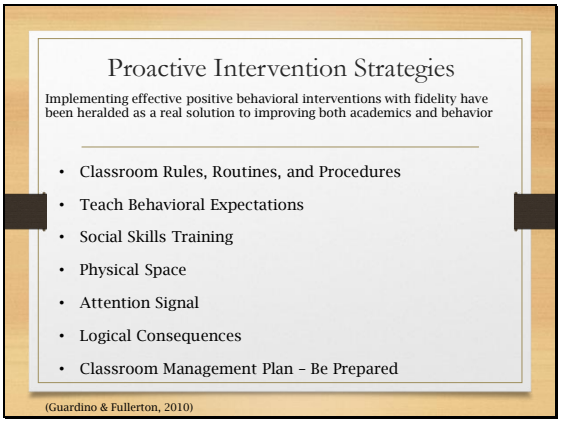
Slide 25

Brainstorming Activity

Table Rally

Think of as many proactive behavior strategies as you can…

Slide 26



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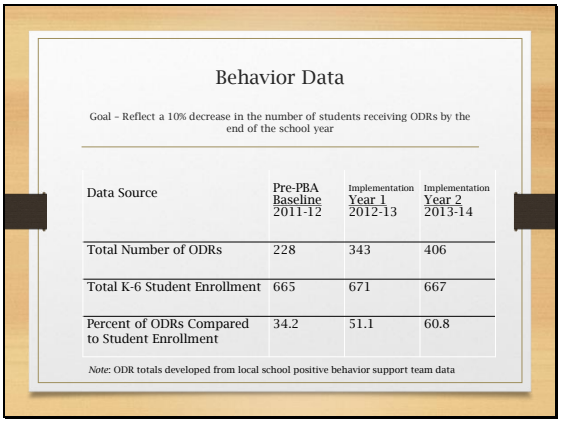

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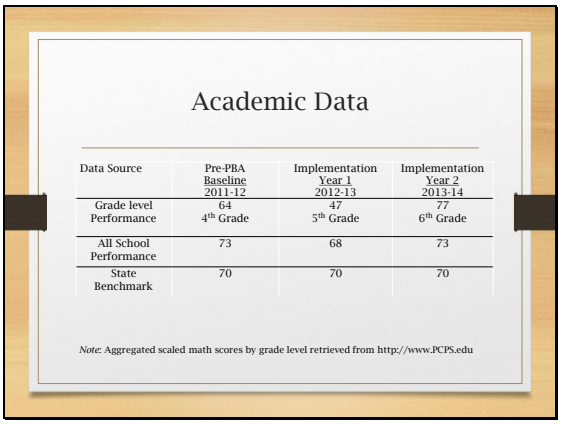
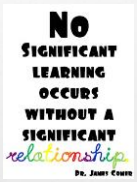


Slide 29

Relationships Matter



Rita Pierson Video
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2CDCBPmhN8

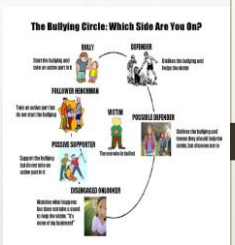
What does the research say?
M. Boynton & C. Boynton
Developing Positive Teacher-Student Relationships

Slide 30

Classroom Management

123 Magic provides practical methods for eliminating disruptive behavior and encouraging on task work habits.

Second Step lessons designed to nurture social and emotional awareness which decreases problem behaviors and increases student success. Lessons promote self-regulation, safety, and support.



Olweus Bullying Prevention Program
Bullying Circle

Slide 31

Session 3 - Purpose

This session provides training for school staff to further develop foundations of PBA to build on the previous two sessions. Teams will be given time to individualize the implementation strategies to meet their classroom needs.

Slide 32

Session 3 Agenda

Lunch on your own ~

- Welcome and Opening Activity
- Tier 3 Strategies
- Current Discipline Data
- What is working/not working
- Sustainability- Review common areas
- Self-assessment Guide
- Evaluation

Slide 33

Hallway Procedures

- **Red Zone**
- Single, straight, and silent

- "Hallway Hero" given tickets to recognize compliance
- Teachers greet students at their doorway and walk with their class during transitions

(Adapted from PBA Updates, 2013)

Slide 34

Café Procedures

- **Green Cups = Following cafeteria rules. Keep it up!**

Yellow Cups = Caution! Make a change!

Red Cups = STOP! Think about your choices

- Yellow Zone
- Students can move from yellow back to green if behavior improves. Once on red, students stay on red.
- When students arrive in the cafeteria they will sit at their assigned table. When students are settled, administrator on duty or teachers will dismiss buyers to the lunch line.
- Teachers and specialists are encouraged to eat lunch with students during the 1st week of school

(Adapted from PBA Updates, 2013)

Slide 35

Bus Procedures

- Each grade level assigned a bus to coach
- Leave classroom when dismissed on the TV
- Coach greet students
- Removal of students demonstrating unsafe/out of control
- Non-emergency behaviors
- Bus coaches select a Bus Rider of the Month

(Adapted from PBA Updates, 2013)

Slide 36

Recess Procedures

- **Green Zone**
- Students are only permitted to play on: Mulched area, Blacktop, and Softball Fields
- At least one teacher stationed at each play area
- Walkie-talkies
  First teacher out - pick up walkie talkie from office
  Last teacher in - return walkie talkie to office

(Adapted from PBA Updates, 2013)

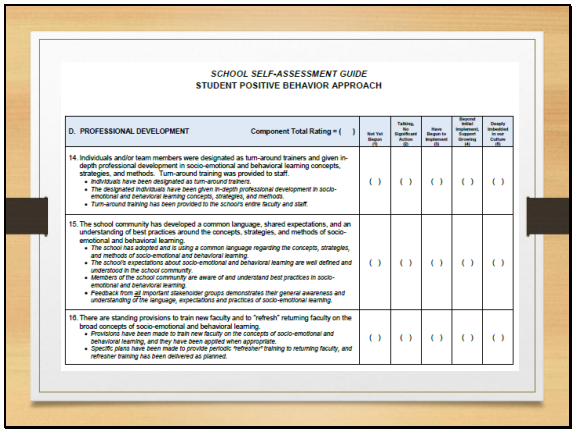
Slide 37

Bathroom Procedures

- **Red Zone**
- Students need to sign bathroom log before leaving class
- Students should always be sent with a buddy
- Bathrooms should be checked for cleanliness before and after group bathroom breaks
- Main bathroom doors will be propped open

(Adapted from PBA Updates, 2013)

Slide 38



SCHOOL SELF-ASSESSMENT GUIDE
STUDENT POSITIVE BEHAVIOR APPROACH

D. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT Component Total Rating = ( )	Not Yet Begun (0)	Talking About Action (1)	Have Begun to Implement (2)	Beyond Initial Implement.; Support Growing (4)	Deeply Embedded in our Culture (5)
14. Individuals and/or team members were designated as turn-around trainers and given in-depth professional development in socio-emotional and behavioral learning concepts, strategies, and methods. Turn-around training was provided to staff. • Individuals have been designated as turn-around trainers. • The designated individuals have been given in-depth professional development in socio-emotional and behavioral learning concepts, strategies, and methods. • Turn-around training has been provided to the school's entire faculty and staff.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
15. The school community has developed a common language, shared expectations, and an understanding of best practices around the concepts, strategies, and methods of socio-emotional and behavioral learning. • The school has adopted and is using a common language regarding the concepts, strategies, and methods of socio-emotional and behavioral learning. • The school's expectations about socio-emotional and behavioral learning are well defined and understood in the school community. • Members of the school community are aware of and understand best practices in socio-emotional and behavioral learning. • Feedback from all important stakeholder groups demonstrates their general awareness and understanding of the language, expectations and practices of socio-emotional learning.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
16. There are standing provisions to train new faculty and to "refresh" returning faculty on the broad concepts of socio-emotional and behavioral learning. • Provisions have been made to train new faculty on the concepts of socio-emotional and behavioral learning, and they have been applied when appropriate. • Specific plans have been made to provide periodic "refresher" training to returning faculty, and refresher training has been delivered as planned.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Slide 39

Wrap up

Nurturing our kids hearts and souls as well as their minds and their bodies is educating the whole child.
Maggie Dent

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFnMTHhKdkw

Rita Pierson: Every kid needs a champion

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Appendix B: Interview Questions

Purpose – The purpose of the interview questions is to obtain participants' thoughts and opinions about the blended behavior management model being implemented at the school.

Background Questions

- Tell me about your background in education; i.e., places taught, how many years, subjects taught, and whatever else you would like to share.
- Over the course of your career, what is the extent of your training or exposure to Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Responsive Classroom (RC)?
    - Have you taken a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) course or received training in PBIS?
    - Have you taken a Responsive Classroom (RC) course or received training in RC?

Interview Questions

1. Think back over the last few years about the school's behavior management program.
    a. What aspects have worked?
    b. What aspects could be improved?
2. How has the implementation of PBA impacted the school; i.e., instruction, climate, teacher morale, student behavior?
3. Consider the school's *Student Behavior Management Process* for dealing with discipline.
    a. How has the process supported or not supported your efforts to manage the behavior of your students?

   b. What changes in behavior, if any, have taken place over the past 3 years since implementing a blended behavior management program (PBA)?
4. How has the implementation of PBA's three-tiered initiatives improved or hindered student academic achievement?
5. How has the implementation of the PBA three-tiered initiatives improved or hindered student behavior?
6. What obstacles with the implementation, if eliminated, would improve the effectiveness of implementing PBA with fidelity?

Suggested Probes to be used to obtain additional information or clarification

- Can you elaborate a bit more about that?
- Can you explain further?
- In what ways?
- Can you give me an example?
- Why was that important to you?

Appendix C: Sample Categorization of Transcribed Interview Responses

Research Question 3: What are teachers' perceptions of the PBA program's effectiveness?

Interview Question 3b: What changes in behavior, if any, have taken place over the past 3 years since implementing a blended behavior management program (PBA)?

Theme: Behavior changes

Codes	**Properties**	**Participant's Responses**
1. Behavior worsened **2. Instruction interrupted** **3. Consequence procedures inconsistent** **4. Improvement observed**	• Increase in disrespect • Misbehavior impacts teaching and learning • Peers influenced by negative behavior	• Behavior steadily worse the last few years [1] • Behavior in terms of respect has gone down over the last few years [1] • Students constantly push the limits of acceptable behavior [1] • Two years ago behavior totally out of control/ Has improved [1] • Don't feel kids are as respectful to teachers as they have been in the past [1] • Behavior declined. "We say because of home life" [1] • Behavior has been on the decline for about 5 years [1] • Noticed more aggressive behavior. Less than 10% of the students, but level of defiance is ten-fold [1] • Want to keep kids in the classroom, but behaviors impact instruction [2] • Time it takes to address the behavior takes a toll on classroom instruction [2] • Students observe inconsistencies in how yellow and red zone students are disciplined [3] • Troubled students realize there are no significant consequences to bad behavior so there's no change in behavior [3] • Good students pick up on trend of bad behavior and their behavior become questionable [3] • Behavior is actually better, but still see the same type of behaviors [4]