Positive Behavior Support: Exploration of an Applied Behavior Analysis

by
Sammy Demian

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Approval Page

This applied dissertation was submitted by Sammy Demian under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

Steven Hecht, PhD
Committee Chair

Marcia Adams O’Neil, EdD
Committee Member

Kimberly Durham, PsyD
Interim Dean
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Abstract


This applied dissertation was designed to measure the effects of a positive behavior support program implemented at a title one elementary school. The state reading scores and referrals were used to determine the results of the program. The findings were not significant however the need for positive behavior support and social/emotional learning interventions are evident. The treatment school had historically received a failing grade from the state until new administration implemented a positive behavior support plan. Results indicated discipline referrals decreased and reading scores improved as both teachers and students benefitted from a program that focused on rewarding positive behavior and offering additional support for students who demonstrated disruptive behavior.
# Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1
   Nature of the Problem ................................................................................................................ 1
   Statement of the Problem ......................................................................................................... 2
   Researcher’s Role ...................................................................................................................... 7
   Definition of Terms .................................................................................................................. 7
   Purpose of the Study ............................................................................................................... 8

Chapter 2: Literature Review ........................................................................................................ 10
   Theoretical Framework ............................................................................................................. 11
   Personality Development ........................................................................................................ 18
   Positive Behavior Intervention Support .................................................................................. 21
   Effects on Academic Achievement ......................................................................................... 24
   Treatment of Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorders ...................................................... 25
   Prompting Appropriate Behavior ............................................................................................. 27
   Exposure to Violence ............................................................................................................... 32
   Resilience ................................................................................................................................. 34
   Perceptions of Administrators ................................................................................................. 38
   Summary .................................................................................................................................. 39
   Research Questions ............................................................................................................... 39

Chapter 3: Methodology ................................................................................................................ 41
   Overview .................................................................................................................................. 41
   Participants ............................................................................................................................... 42
   Instruments ............................................................................................................................... 43
   Reliability ................................................................................................................................ 43
   Validity ..................................................................................................................................... 44
   Procedures ............................................................................................................................... 44

Chapter 4: Results .......................................................................................................................... 47
   Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 47
   Demographic Characteristics ................................................................................................. 47
   Data Analysis ............................................................................................................................ 49

Chapter 5: Discussion ..................................................................................................................... 54
   Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 54
   Summary of Findings ............................................................................................................... 54
   Interpretations of Findings ...................................................................................................... 55
   Context of Findings .................................................................................................................. 57
   Implications of Findings .......................................................................................................... 60
   Limitations ............................................................................................................................... 61
   Future Directions ..................................................................................................................... 62

References ...................................................................................................................................... 64
Tables

1  Descriptive Statistics of Control and Treatment Schools for Time 1 (2016) and Time 2 (2017). Gender, Race, English Language Learners (ELL), Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL), and Students With Disabilities (SWD) are included…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………48

2  Proportion of Students Who Pass the FSA (Florida State Assessment) Reading With a Score of 2 or Greater, Separated by School and Year …………………49

3  Leveled Reading Scores of Treatment and Control Schools for 2016 ………..50

4  Leveled Reading Scores of Treatment and Control Schools for 2017…………51

5  Mean Amount of Students Scaled Reading Score in Treatment and Control Schools and Standard Deviation for Control Time 1 (2016) and Control Time 2 (2017)…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………52

6  Proportion of Students Referrals Separated by Time and Group ………………53
Chapter 1: Introduction

Nature of the Problem

The debate around the appropriateness of children’s behaviors has been a persistent topic in American culture and educational system. Student behavior is currently studied both anecdotally through observations by parents and teachers and formally through research studies. A large negative correlation was found between both socioeconomic status and the racial categories of African American and Hispanic to the percent of students passing the reading portions of a district achievement assessment (Melgoza & Trujillo, 2013). Findings suggested that schools with a larger proportion of students receiving free and reduced meals and encompassing a higher percentage of African American and Hispanic students demonstrated a lower percent of students passing and disruptive behavior.

American public schools have the challenging task of educating children from different socioeconomic, cultural, and language backgrounds. The scope of the problem is reflected in the recurring achievement gap among children along the lines of socioeconomic status. Based on standardized achievement scores, low-income children trail their more affluent peers in most academic subjects (Tobin & Vincent, 2010). The U.S. Department of Education has spent a massive amount of funds under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and now the Every Student Succeeds Act, its successor and its Reading First program with the goal of closing the achievement gap among children from low socioeconomic backgrounds and their more advantaged peers.

A large number of these children continue to fail, particularly in learning to read in the early grades. Consider the gap between the reading levels of economically
disadvantaged students on free lunch compared with a group of fourth graders who were not on the free lunch program. As reported by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (2005), 58% of fourth graders eligible for free lunch programs were reading below basic reading proficiency compared to 27% of students from the higher-income groups. This high failure rate among children on free lunch is more than twice the failure rate of the children not on free lunch in spite of the fact that Title One has addressed reading problems in low-income groups for decades. The emphasis is to serve all students and combine all resources to achieve a common goal (Bean, Cassidy, Grumet, Shelton, & Wallis, 2000).

Statement of the Problem

The demographics of today’s population are rapidly changing. According to United States Census forecasts by 2050 the minority will be the majority in America (Melgoza & Trujillo, 2013). More African American and Hispanic students are entering schools across the nation with complex issues that teachers are not equipped to deal with (Begeny & Martens, 2006). Minority students are almost four times more likely to get suspended from school than white students (Tobin & Vincent, 2010). When a student is repeatedly removed from class, the ability to achieve academically is compromised. Missing instruction because of a referral or suspension results in the loss of time in class, which further degrades academic achievement because the student has missed instruction. When a student falls behind academically, behavior issues become more of an issue because the student stops attempting to complete work and exhibits negative classroom behaviors (Tobin & Vincent, 2010). This vicious cycle leads to poor academic performance, failing classes, and dropping out of high school. The detrimental effects of
exclusion from school jeopardize students’ immediate school performance therefore, it is important to provide interventions and positive behavior support to students who exhibit disruptive behavior. Minority students who demonstrate disruptive behavior need emotional support; however, due to budget cuts social service resources are scarce. The problem is schools are not achieving the primary goal of ensuring that low achieving students demonstrate proficient levels on standardized tests.

**The Topic.** Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) is defined as a school-wide systems approach of continual teaching, modeling, recognizing, and rewarding positive student behavior which will reduce unnecessary discipline and promote a climate of greater productivity, safety, and learning (Positive Behavior, 2009). PBIS was established to create a school-wide climate and has been shown to lower referrals and suspensions, and create a positive climate for students and staff (Center on PBIS, 2005). It is described as a framework or approach comprised of intervention practices and organizational systems for establishing the social culture, learning, and teaching environment, and individual behavior supports needed to achieve academic and social success for all students (Dunlap, Hornor, & Koegel, 1996).

Creating a positive school climate and culture to foster healthy peer relationships, communication skills, and a positive learning environment are essential for every school because it promotes student development and growth. Striving to create a community and sustaining a positive culture is a school-wide effort. Positive Behavior Intervention Systems (PBIS) is a behavior management system that focuses on including teachers, staff, students, and parents in the process of building a positive educational climate and culture. Since PBIS is a whole school initiative, its aim is to provide a structured climate
and culture of expectations, guidance, and school-wide unity.

**The Research Problem.** There are 7,000 high school dropouts a day in the United States which adds up to over one million students a year who do not graduate from high school (Alliance of Excellent Education, 2011). Of those who drop out, African American and Hispanic students are more at risk (Child Trends, 2010). The problem is schools lack the intervention programs needed to address disruptive behavior. PBIS is a systems approach to alleviate negative behavior by understanding what triggers contribute to negative behavior and what controls will improve or prevent negative behavior.

**Background and Justification.** Behavior intervention systems are implemented by a large number of school districts across the United States in an effort to address negative student behavior and create a positive school-wide environment (Sugai & Horner, 2002). Schools are the one mechanism that societies have utilized to provide a positive climate to learn and encourage academic success regardless of a student’s background. In an effort to establish a positive learning climate, behavior management intervention systems such as Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) have been instituted with the aim of establishing a positive school climate through the implementation of proactive school-wide behavior support systems.

A report by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2010) stated that a student drops out of high school every 26 seconds. The majority of African American and Hispanic students who have trouble behaving in school come from single parent family units and are low socioeconomic households. Children from low-income families are likely to suffer from emotional problems such as anxiety and depression (Faul, Simonsen,
& Stepensky, 2011). Census data reported that more than half of Americans have fallen into poverty and that a child born into poverty today has a great chance of remaining in poverty (Reclaiming The American Dream, 2012). If poor students were provided with appropriate support systems in elementary school, then these students would have the educational opportunities to close the socioeconomic gap. This, in turn, would ensure these students have the same opportunities as wealthier students thus, leading to a more productive life (Reclaiming The American Dream, 2012). The achievement gap is an important factor to take into account when researching achievement discrepancies, but another factor often associated with the achievement gap is socioeconomic status.

Individuals are viewed in society through these resources, which affect their position within society. When individuals, because of societal and social norms, lack or do not have access to these resources, the ability to grow personally and professionally are limited. Students who demonstrate behavior problems early in life are at higher risk of developing academic problems (Hawkins, Ling, & Weber, 2011).

**Deficiencies in the evidence.** Classroom teachers do not feel they have the knowledge, skills, or resources to make sound decisions about selecting appropriate mental-health supports for children (Goel, Herman, Puri, Reinke, & Stormont, 2011). All children misbehave at times, but behavior disorders go beyond mischief and rebellion. Of the 5% to 9% of children who meet the criteria for severe emotional disorder, only a small percentage is served (Kauffman, 2005; Walker, 2004). Warning indicators can include harming themselves or others, destroying property, frequent tantrums, and consistent hostility towards authority figures. Students who demonstrate disruptive behavior are at risk of failing in school. When a student performs poorly on a state or
district assessment, teachers and/or administrators are quick to decide the student needs academic support without analyzing the students’ emotional state. Offering academic support without considering the students’ well being does not assist the student as school practitioners often misunderstand the distinction between intervention and accommodations (Evans, Sadler, Schultz, Storer, & Watabe, 2011).

School counseling as a profession is at a crossroads and the role of guidance counselors in education needs to be more clearly defined (Bridgeland & Bruce, 2011). Bridgeland & Bruce (2011) suggested that more positive behavior support programs are needed at the elementary school level. This study will determine if a positive behavior support program will increase academic achievement in an identified sample population.

**Setting and Audience.** The setting of the study took place at two Title I elementary schools (treatment school and control school) located in South Florida. The researcher examined the reading scores between fourth and fifth grade in two schools over the span of two years. At the end of every school year, support staff, administrators, and classroom teachers at both schools, work to create class lists for the next school year in an attempt to ensure that each class is set up to equate with the other classes in terms of class size, gender, English Language Learners, students with special needs, and disruptive students. The demographics of the student population at the Treatment School identified in this study mirror the community: African American 65%, Hispanic 22%, White 8%, and Asian 3%. Similarly, the demographics at the Control School are: African American 65%, Hispanic 21%, White 13%, and Asian 1%. By identifying students’ social needs at an early age, educators can provide interventions to help students finish school. Parents, teachers, administrators, and guidance or counseling service personnel
should all be involved in identifying the academic, social, and emotional needs of the student.

**Researcher’s Role**

The researcher was an employee as a fourth grade teacher at the Treatment School prior to the implementation of Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS). The researcher is now a behavior specialist at an alternative education center and collected de-identified archival Florida State Assessment (FSA) reading score data from the Treatment school that implemented PBIS and de-identified FSA data from the Control school that did not implement PBIS.

**Definition of Terms**

*Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)* is one of the most commonly diagnosed mental disorders of childhood defined as a chronic condition marked by persistent inattention, hyperactivity, and sometimes impulsivity. (Evans, Sadler, Schultz, Storer, & Watabe, 2011).

*Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)* is a child-focused program encompassing violations of social rules and negative actions toward others, such as aggression, lying, and stealing (Fossum, Handegard, Martinussen, & Morch, 2008).

*Coping* is defined as the thoughts and behaviors used to manage the internal and external demands of situations that are appraised as stressful. Coping has been a focus of research in the social sciences for more than three decades (Schwarzer & Taubert, 2002).

*Kindergarten Peer Assisted Learning Strategies (KPALS)* is a peer-tutoring program that links high achieving students with lower achieving students or those with
comparable achievement for structured learning. It promotes academic gains as well as social enhancement (Piana, Volpe, Young, & Zaslofsky, 2011).

*Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST)* is a family focused home-based treatment for adolescents with serious antisocial behavior and emotional disturbance (Sandler, Schoenfelder, Wolchik, & MacKinnon, 2011).

*Positive Youth Development* is a positive adaptation through acquisition of stage-salient skills and abilities in multiple domains (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2004), Lee, Cheung, & Kwong, 2012).

*Resilience* is when individuals or groups adapt positively within the context of adversity and acquire the ability to adapt well to adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or even significant sources of stress (Luthar, 2003).

*Positive Behavior Support (PBIS)* is a set of disciplinary practices that are built on the assumption that behavioral expectations defined, supported, and implemented by the entire school community help to establish a common culture where all students are held to the same behavioral standards (Center on PBIS, 2005; Horner, Sugai, Lewis-Palmer, & Todd, 2001; Sugai & Horner, 2002; Sugai, Horner & Gresham, 2002).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study examined the impact of PBIS on state reading scores at the Treatment School and measured the reading assessment scores of fourth grade students during the 2016 school year and compared them to the reading assessment scores of the same students, now in fifth grade, in the 2017 school year following the implementation of PBIS. Afterwards, the researcher compared the results to the Control School that did not implement PBIS. The Treatment School received a failing grade from
the state in 2016 when PBIS was not implemented. During the 2017 school year new administration implemented PBIS and the school received a passing grade from the state. Variables such as attendance and the number of referrals issued were also being measured in the study. PBIS begins by building a behavior support team of key individuals and stakeholders who are most involved in the child’s school life. Team members collaborate in multiple ways in order to develop, implement, and monitor a child’s support plan. Members on the team will observe students during the first month of school in order to determine which students demonstrate disruptive behavior such as defiance, hyperactivity, and who underachieve. Once the behavior has been identified and adequately defined, the team’s next step is to observe the child during predetermined activities and routines in order to note the occurrence of challenging behavior as well as the replacement skills that are taught.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

A study of behavior theories can assist schools in learning what motivates students. In order to predict a person’s behavior, it is important to understand which motives or needs of people cause a certain action at a particular time (Hersey & Campbell, 2004). The Hierarchy of Needs ascertains that people have five basic needs that build on each other. The first need must be met before a person can move on to the next level. The levels include, physiological, safety, social, esteem and self-actualization (Hersey & Campbell, 2004).

The Expectancy Theory suggests that “felt needs cause behavior, and this motivated behavior in a work setting is increased if a person perceives a positive relationship between effort and performance” (Hersey & Campbell, 2004, p. 36). Alderfer’s Existence, Relatedness and Growth (ERG) Theory, an extension of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, suggests there are three core needs, existence, relatedness, and growth, which influence behavior.

Understanding behavior, predicting behavior, and controlling people are three ingredients necessary to affect demonstrated human ability within an organization (Hersey & Campbell, 2004). A competent, influential teacher can understand the circumstances involved in a situation, alter the student’s behavior based on available resources, and interact with others in a way that people can understand and accept (Hersey & Campbell, 2004). The understanding of human behavior can assist educators in understanding the “why” of past behavior. More importantly, understanding human behavior can, to an extent, predict, change, and even shape future behavior (Hersey & Campbell, 2004). Through understanding the human element, a teacher can successfully
motivate and develop students across all skill levels. The problem is schools lack the intervention programs needed to address disruptive behavior. The researcher examined the impact of changing a child’s behavior as it relates to a child’s academic success.

The impact of the implementation of PBIS program on academic achievement in an elementary school setting will be assessed. This involved exploring the impact of PBIS on student academic success by examining state reading scores. Included in this literature review are social learning theories as well as causes of disruptive behavior, and the effects of PBIS on academic achievement.

**Theoretical Framework**

**Bandura’s Social Learning Theory.** This theory posits that people learn from one another through observation, imitation, and modeling. His theory explained human behavior in terms of continuous interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences. Children who demonstrate aggressive behavior have usually been exposed to it at home (Bandura, 1997).

Born in 1925, Albert Bandura was trained and began his career in the mid-twentieth century when explanations of human functioning, including classroom learning, were dominated by behavioral models advocated by researchers such as B. F. Skinner (1904-1990), Clark Hull (1884-1952), Kenneth Spence (1907-1967), and Edward Tolman (1886-1959). Bandura and his colleagues initiated a series of studies designed to examine social explanations for why and when children displayed aggressive behaviors. These studies demonstrated the value of modeling for acquiring novel behaviors and provided initial evidence for the separation of learning and performance (Bandura, 1997). They also indicated the importance of the learner's perceptions of the environment generally, of
the person modeling a behavior specifically, and of the learner's expectations regarding the consequences of behavior. Findings from this systematic research contradicted assumptions within behavioral models that learning was the result of trial and error learning or that changes in behavior were due primarily to the consequences of one's own actions.

A person's cognition, the environment, and behavior play important roles in learning new knowledge and skills. Bandura's social learning theory stressed the importance of observational learning, imitation and modeling. Observational learning has been a part of the human experience for a long time, but it was not until somewhat recently that psychologists began to examine this phenomenon closely in an effort to understand it better. Observational learning can be understood by four distinct concepts - attention, retention, motor reproduction, and reinforcement (Bandura, 1997). These four concepts used in sequence allow organisms to acquire the ability to engage in new behaviors simply through observation. His theory integrates a continuous interaction between behaviors, personal factors including cognition, and the environment referred to as reciprocal causation model. However, Bandura does not suggest the three factors in the triadic model make equal contributions to behavior. The influence of behavior, environment, and person depends on which factor is strongest at any particular moment.

There are three core concepts at the heart of social learning theory. First is the idea that people can learn through observation. Next is the notion that internal mental states are an essential part of this process. Finally, this theory recognizes that just because something has been learned, it does not mean that it will result in a change in behavior (Bandura, 1997). Bandura's social learning theory has had a significant impact on the field of
education. Today, both teachers and parents recognize the importance of modeling appropriate behaviors.

**Piaget’s Cognitive Theory.** Piaget’s theory basically focused on cognitive structures. Cognitive development involves elaboration of structures or logical relations the child uses to construct and interpret the environment (Mishra, 2014). Cognitive theory is concerned with the development of a person's thought processes (Piaget, 1974). This theory also examined how these thought processes influence how people understand and interact with the world. Early childhood is not only a period of amazing physical growth it is also a time of remarkable mental development. Cognitive abilities associated with memory, reasoning, problem solving, and thinking continue to emerge throughout childhood (Mishra, 2014). Just as structure of an object comprises its parts and the way they are arranged, cognitive structures involve schemes of mental operations that enable the child to perceive, think, and act. Piaget used logical and mathematical models to infer the presence of a structure through the actions performed by the child. This action is the central idea in Piaget’s theory (Mishra, 2014).

Watching his 13-month-old nephew at play influenced Piaget’s interest in child cognitive development. By chance, Piaget observed the toddler playing with a ball. When the ball rolled under a table where the boy could still see it, he simply retrieved the ball and continued playing. When the ball rolled under a sofa out of his sight, however, the child began looking for it where he had last seen it. This reaction struck Piaget as irrational. Piaget came to believe that children lack what he referred to as the object concept, which is the knowledge that objects are separate and distinct from both the individual and the individual's perception of that object (Mishra, 2014).
Jean Piaget set out to study his daughter Jacqueline as she developed through infancy, toddlerhood, and childhood. He quickly noted that during the early months of his daughter's life, she seemed to believe that objects ceased to exist once they were out of her sight. At nearly a year, she started to search actively for objects that were hidden from her view although she made mistakes similar to the one his nephew made. By 21 months, Jacqueline had become skilled at finding hidden objects and understood that objects had an existence separate from her perception of them.

Piaget’s observations of his nephew and daughter reinforced his budding hypothesis that children’s minds were not merely smaller versions of adult minds. Instead, he proposed, intelligence is something that grows and develops through a series of stages (Piaget 1974). There are both qualitative and quantitative differences between the thinking of young children versus older children.

Piaget emphasized the interaction of biological factors of heredity and physical maturation with environmental experiences in understanding children’s development (Piaget 1974). Piaget was also concerned with the nature and origin of knowledge, the sense in which basic concepts about the world are realized and the way knowledge develops. In studying children’s knowledge about such things as objects, space, and time, Piaget developed simple techniques to demonstrate changes in the development of children’s thought about such concepts.

Piaget’s ideas form one of the few strong theoretical statements about intelligence that are available to psychology. He believed the core of intelligence is logical thinking. In exploring the development of intelligence, he looked at the ways in which children answer problems on a test, not how correctly they answer, or how many scores do they
obtain on the test. The focus was on description of how children come to know about their world, how they develop the basic scientific concepts, and how their reasoning follows certain structural properties, which can be captured by models drawn from logic and mathematics (Piaget, 1974).

Piaget postulated four stages through which a child’s thinking reaches maturity. These stages are: sensor motor, pre-operational, concrete operational, and formal operational stages (Mishra, 2014). All children pass through these stages invariably in the same order. However, the age at which a child will reach any stage depends upon individual biological and psychological factors as well as the factors present in the child’s physical and social environment (Piaget, 1974).

In the sensorimotor stage, birth to two years, children’s sensory and motor experiences constitute the fundamental basis of knowledge. In this stage, children develop the ability to organize and co-ordinate their sensations and perceptions with physical movements and actions, and they also operate with a primitive symbol system. In the preoperational stage, two to seven years, children’s symbolic system expands with an increase in their capacity to use language and perceptual images. However, a number of limitations cause a child’s thought to fall short of what is seen in later years. These limitations include child’s egocentrism, inability to conserve, failure to order objects in a series, and classify them in groups. In the concrete operational stage, seven to eleven years, the child’s thinking crystallizes into more of a system. The limitations of preoperational stage disappear; the child develops the ability to think from different perspectives, and to think simultaneously about two or more aspects of a problem. One limitation of concrete thinking is the child needs to be able to perceive objects and events
that he or she will think about. In the formal operational stage, which comes into play between 11 and 14 years, the child reaches the most advanced level of thinking. Development of the ability to move beyond the world of actual, concrete experiences allows the child to think logically using abstract propositions, use make believe events, come up with many hypotheses to account for some event, and then test these out in a deductive fashion.

**Vygotsky’s Theory of Human Culture and Social Development.** The seminal work of Russian theorist Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) has exerted a deep influence on psychology over the past 30 years. Vygotsky was an educator turned psychologist and his writings clearly reflect his pedagogical concerns. The fundamental claim in Vygotsky’s genetic analysis is that human mental processes can be understood by considering how and where they occur in growth.

Vygotsky believed that schools and other informal educational situations are the best culture laboratories in which to study thinking. He emphasized the social organization of instruction, writing about the unique form of cooperation between the child and the adult that is the central element of the educational process. Vygotsky's emphasis on the social context of thinking represented the reorganization of a key social system and associated modes of discourse, with potential consequences for developing new forms of thinking.

The three themes that form the core of Vygotsky's theoretical framework are: first; a reliance on a genetic method, second; the claim that higher mental processes in the individual have their origin in social processes, and third; the claim that mental processes can be understood only if the tools and signs that mediate them are understood.
(Vygotsky, 1992). Vygotsky defined development in terms of the emergence of forms of meditation, and his notion of social interaction and its relation to higher mental processes necessarily involves meditational mechanisms.

System’s Theory. Biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy proposed a systems theory as an attempt to formulate common laws that apply to virtually every scientific field. He emphasized that real systems are open to, and interact with their environments, and they can acquire new properties through emergence resulting in continual change (Von Bertalanffy, 1972). Systems theory is therefore a theoretical framework by which elements that act in concert to produce some result are studied (Yawson, 2013).

Systems thinking can be a powerful attribute of an organization. The ability to think about the big picture while identifying unforeseen issues is difficult to develop. Marquardt (2013) defined system thinking as a framework that helps understand overall patterns better, which improves the ability to change. System thinking is a way of looking at the world in which objects are interrelated with one another (Senge, 2006). This organizational theory is based on creating an institution, which develops a student’s emotional and academic success.

While Piaget, developed his cognitive adaptation model of developmental constructivism, Vygotsky identified mental mediation as the primary mechanism underlying intellectual development emphasized the cultural mediation by tools, signs, and social interaction as the core mechanism of higher mental functioning. Individuals shape, or create their own developmental conditions by a process of transactional constitution between themselves and their culturally structured environment.
Özdemir, Özdemir, Kadak, and Nasıroğlu (2012), stated that personality is the integration of characteristics acquired by birth, which separate the individual from others. Personality involves aspects of the individual's mental, emotional, social, and physical features in continuum (Özdemir, Özdemir, Kadak, & Nasıroğlu, 2012). Several theories were suggested to explain developmental processes of personality. Each theory concentrates on one feature of human development as the focal point and then integrates with other areas of development. Most theories assume that childhood, especially up to 5-6 years, has essential influence on the development of personality. The interaction between genetic and environmental factors reveals a unique personality along with growth and the developmental process. As such, an individual who does not have any conflict between his/her basic needs and society's, has a well-developed and psychologically healthy personality.

**Personality Development**

Personality development is the development of the organized pattern of behaviors and attitudes that makes a person distinctive (Özdemir, Özdemir, Kadak, & Nasıroğlu, 2012). Personality development occurs by the ongoing interaction of temperament, character, and environment. Personality is what makes a person a unique person and it is recognizable soon after birth. A child's personality has several components: temperament, environment, and character. Temperament is the set of genetically determined traits that determine the child's approach to the world and how the child learns about the world. There are no genes that specify personality traits, but some genes do control the development of the nervous system, which in turn, controls behavior.
A second component of personality comes from adaptive patterns related to a child's specific environment. Most psychologists agree that temperament and environment influence the development of a person's personality the most (Özdemir, Özdemir, Kadak, & Nasıroğlu, 2012). Temperament, with its dependence on genetic factors, is sometimes referred to as "nature," while the environmental factors are called "nurture."

While there is still controversy as to which factor ranks higher in affecting personality development, all experts agree that high-quality parenting plays a critical role in the development of a child's personality (Özdemir, Özdemir, Kadak, & Nasıroğlu, 2012). When parents understand how their child responds to certain situations, they can anticipate issues that might be problematic for their child. They can prepare the child for the situation or in some cases they may avoid a potentially difficult situation altogether. Parents who know how to adapt their parenting approach to the particular temperament of their child can best provide guidance and ensure the successful development of their child's personality.

The third component of personality is character, which is the set of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral patterns learned from experience that determines how a person thinks, feels, and behaves. A person's character continues to evolve throughout life, although much depends on inborn traits and early experiences. Character is also dependent on a person's moral development.

What role should the public school system have in teaching values? Society is no longer viewed as a given pre-existing state of nature but rather viewed as an arrangement, one that can be disassembled and then rearranged (Costly, 2009). Rarely in the public
school is curriculum given direct attention to the examination of values. The value systems that students develop are directly related to the kind of people they are and will be and to the quality of relationships they form (Trissler, 2000). Many different outlets such as parents, television, music, and other external sources influence students. Decisions are made based on a conscious or unconscious set of values. Through the advancement of technology and the complexity of society children are faced with a greater array of choices than in previous generations and often ponder over what and how to think, believe, or behave.

Moral issues are not necessarily matters of right versus wrong. Values are guides that supply us with a moral compass by which to navigate the course of our daily lives (Kosner & Posner, 2007). Moral values relate directly to judgments about what is appropriate or inappropriate behavior (Johnson, 2009). Brown, 2000, stated that ethics focuses on action rather than behavior. A well-behaved person is perceived as someone who automatically does the right thing. Democracy is a key value in that it works by persuasion, open discussion, and consensus building around basic shared values (Weston, 2008).

Character education in public schools has diminished over the years because the focus has turned to content area instruction and test scores. The implementation of a positive behavior curriculum is a greater need in schools today due to children’s lack of social skills and inappropriate behavior (Costly & Harrington, 2012). Behavior issues are on the rise and students are not learning effective tools within the family setting. Schools are becoming a bigger influence in the development of children’s moral compass. Character education programs have a positive effect on achievement, classroom behavior,
and long-term test scores (Brannon, 2008). Creasey (2008) ascertained that character 
education is a program that can be implemented in order to turn students into respectful, 
responsible, contributing members of society.

Many critics of character education in schools maintain that parents and family 
members should be responsible for instilling morals in children. In a society that places 
such an emphasis on individual freedom; many schoolteachers become reluctant to assert 
any values (Ellenwood, 2007). Educators differ on their own sets of values and there may 
be disagreements on values and their relative priority (Trissler, 2000). Therefore, it is a 
choice and one’s values should not be forced onto another person.

Character education needs to be addressed in one way or another in public 
schools. Children need guidance and a decision making process in order to deal with 
issues of society today (Creasy, 2008). Parents are their children’s first teacher and as 
children enter school, teachers join in the process of shaping their minds, attitudes, and 
behaviors (Bannon, 2008). If parents are unable or unwilling to instill a set of values in 
their children, the school is the next best place to do so.

**Positive Behavior Intervention Support**

Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) is an applied science that uses 
educational methods to expand an individual’s living environment to achieve while 
minimizing problem behavior (Dunlap, Hornor, & Koegel, 1996). Positive behavior 
refers to increasing the likelihood of success in normal day-to-day settings and support 
refers to educational methods used to teach, strengthen, and expand positive behavior.

Students' inappropriate behaviors are difficult to change because they serve a 
purpose for the child. Often adults in the child’s environment reinforce undesired
behaviors because the child will receive attention as a result of the behavior. Classroom behavior management strategies may include praising positive behavior, ignoring mild negative behavior, and providing appropriate reprimands and prompts for behavior (Evans, Sadler, Schultz, Storer, & Watabe, 2011).

Tobin and Vincent (2011) examined suspension rates from 77 schools implementing School-wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS). School-wide Positive Behavior Support is a set of disciplinary practices that are built on the assumption that behavioral expectations defined, supported, and implemented by the entire school community help to establish a common culture where all students are held to the same behavioral standards (Center on PBIS, 2005; Horner, Sugai, Lewis-Palmer, & Todd, 2001; Sugai & Horner, 2002; Sugai, Horner, & Gresham, 2002). The authors examined patterns of exclusion, associations between decreased exclusions and SWPBS implementation, ethnicities equally represented, and students with disabilities from varying ethnicities. Stillwell (2009) reported that 60.3% of African American students graduate from high school within four years, compared to 80.3% of White students, and 6.8% of Black students drop out of high school compared to 3% of White students. Behavior is a reaction to environment so when the environment changes the behavior changes, meaning that schools need to place the student in an environment where they can be successful. Overall, elementary schools that implemented SWPBS showed a decrease in suspension rates.

School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) is a universal model for promoting safe and orderly schools that has gained national attention and is being widely disseminated. Debnam and Bradshaw (2013) examined factors at
multiple levels within a school that are associated with staff members’ perceptions of administrator support for the implementation of targeted and intensive positive behavior supports. Administrators are the instructional leaders within the school and establish the goals and climate for the school. Beets, Flay, Vuchinich, Acock, and Allred (2008) highlighted the importance of principal leadership as a factor influencing program implementation. Supportive school administrators allocate resources and ensure that staff members have sufficient time and training to provide the necessary support for their students. The primary aim of the study was to examine staff perceptions of administrator support for SWPBIS (Tier 1), and Tier 2 and 3 interventions in relation to fidelity of implementation of SWPBIS. Data for the study came from 45 Maryland public elementary schools enrolled in a trial aimed at determining the impact of Tier 2 support services provided to schools implementing SWPBIS.

Huston, McLoyd, Mistry, and Vandewater, (2002) assessed whether economic hardships are proposed to affect a child’s well being. Samples of 419 elementary school-aged children from ethnically diverse, low-income families were evaluated. The sample consisted of 57% African American and 28% Hispanic mostly headed by single mothers. The results indicated that economic hardship influenced children in part through its impact on parent’s sense of psychological well being and parenting behaviors.

Black, Eber, Lewandowski, Myers, Sims, Simonsen, and Sugai (2011) explored the effects of implementing school wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) with and without fidelity over time for a sample of 428 Illinois schools. SWPBS relies on district- and state-level support structures to facilitate implementation of SWPBS with fidelity across an increasing number of schools (McIntosh, Horner, & Sugai, 2009; Sugai,
Horner, & McIntosh, 2008). Overall, there was improvement for all schools that implemented SWPBS with fidelity over time. Schools demonstrated improvement on all social behavior and academic outcome measures (Black, Eber, Lewandowski, Myers, Sims, Simonsen, & Sugai, 2011).

**Effects on Academic Achievement**

Researchers indicated the percentage of young children who display behavior problems is approximately 10%, and that percentage increases for children with additional risk factors (Benedict, Horner, & Squires, 2007). Hawkins, Ling, and Weber (2011) investigated the effects of a class wide interdependent group contingency on off-task behaviors. When students display disruptive behaviors, it not only interferes with their own learning but also the learning of the other students in the class. As well, the disruptive behavior hindered the teacher’s ability to instruct. Researchers suggested the intervention decreased off-task behavior and increased academic achievement. It is important to provide early intervention and positive behavior supports to students and consultation services to teachers in early school settings to address student problem behavior. Students who demonstrate behavior problems early in life are at higher risk of developing academic problems, conduct disorders, social rejection, and are more susceptible to drug abuse (Benedict, Horner, & Squires, 2007).

Mental health problems have been found to be more prevalent in youths in juvenile justice settings than their peers in the general population (Colins, Vermeiren, Vreugdenhil, Brink, Doreleijers, & Broekaert, 2010). Hoeve, McReynolds, and Wasserman (2013) examined associations between disorder profiles and reoffending youths between 18 and 23 years of age. The study considered rearrests in young
adulthood as predicted by profiles of adolescent psychiatric disorders. Knowing mental health status may improve identification of youths likely to commit a crime.

**Treatment of Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorders**

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is one of the most commonly diagnosed mental disorders of childhood, accounting for a large proportion of referrals to school psychologists and other school mental health professionals. Evans, Sadler, Schultz, Storer, and Watbe (2011) reviewed evidence-based psychosocial interventions for elementary and secondary students with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Although the disorder did not entitle students to classroom accommodations, federal regulations have increased the likelihood that school-based interventions are a part of the treatment. When school-based treatments are provided, educators and school mental health professionals have been encouraged to integrate evidence-based interventions into their practices. The results indicated that interventions that are behavioral in nature such as verbal praise and prompting work best for elementary students with ADHD while cognitive interventions become more effective for secondary students and beyond (Evans, Sadler, Schultz, Storer, & Watabe, 2011). Behavioral techniques appear best suited to address problems with disruptive behavior, and cognitive interventions appear most promising for some disorders (Chronis, Gamble, Roberts, & Pelham, 2006; Levine & Anshel, 2011).

The employment of school-based interventions for children with disruptive behavior problems may help overcome the difficulties involved in implementing parent-focused interventions. Liber, De Boo, Huizenga, and Prins (2013) investigated the effectiveness of a school-based targeted intervention program for disruptive behavior.
Disruptive behavior problems in childhood can predict disruptive behavior problems in adolescence and adulthood (Loeber, Burke, & Pardini, 2009). A child-focused cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) program was introduced at schools in disadvantaged settings. Disruptive behavior is a unifying term for oppositional defiant behavior, conduct problems, and antisocial behavior. It refers to violations of social rules and negative actions toward others, such as aggression, lying, and stealing (Fossum, Handegard, Martinussen, & Morch, 2008). School based programs have yielded positive short-term and long-term outcomes, and targeted interventions have shown stronger gains than universal school-based intervention programs. In the future, researchers could assess the moderating impact of teacher characteristics such as the teacher–student relationship (Sabal & Pianta, 2012).

One of the most widely disseminated programs for treatment of adolescent conduct problems is Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST). MST is a family focused home-based treatment for adolescents with serious antisocial behavior and emotional disturbance. The purpose of the study by Weiss, Han, Harris, Catron, Ngo, Caron, and Guth (2013) was to conduct a randomized independent evaluation of MST in the United States. Participants were 164 adolescents (age 11–18 years) and their parents/guardians. Interventions including positive parenting practices, family functioning, and family adaptability demonstrated positive results. For example, Shaw, Connell, Dishion, Wilson, and Gardner (2009) reported that improvements in maternal depression, following a brief behavioral intervention for families with preschool-aged children, have mediated subsequent improvements in child behavior. However, psychological aggression increased following the treatment. Developers of treatments for child behavior problems
have become increasingly attentive to the identification of the processes by which parenting interventions exert their effects on child functioning (Sandler, Schoenfelder, Wolchik, & MacKinnon, 2011).

**Prompting Appropriate Behavior**

Elementary school children are a unique group. They are creative, fun, and independent, but they can be challenging, especially in the classroom. Behavior problems in school with this age group are common as children learn to test their limits and assert their independence. Understanding the causes of misbehavior, and how to deal with them can make a classroom flow more smoothly.

To get to the root of student misbehaviors, there is a need to address the reasons behind them. Students do not act out because they are bad people. They are simply looking for ways to establish and maintain a sense of self while navigating through the extreme experiences they have. When a student acts out, it is often a call for help. Addressing these calls directly and honing in on solutions provide students with a chance to make real and lasting changes (Shaw, Connell, Dishion, Wilson, & Gardner, 2009).

Some students misbehave because they are bored or do not understand the rules and expectations. Others act out to get attention from other students, their parents, or the teacher. Some students have learning disabilities that may show up as misbehavior while others act out in response to or as a way to cope with a negative home environment (Sandler, Schoenfelder, Wolchik, & MacKinnon, 2011).

Others may see their parents or siblings behave in certain ways and copy that behavior. Common discipline issues for elementary school children include talking out of turn, disrupting class, being irresponsible or careless, disobeying rules, and whining
Some, such as bullying, fighting, defiance, and lying, can start out small, but escalate into more serious problems if not dealt with properly. Identifying what causes students to act out can help the teacher intervene before it happens, possibly avoiding bad behavior altogether. Positive reinforcement by praising students when they behave properly and minimizing downtime by keeping children engaged in activities are also good strategies. Establishing rapport and clear, consistent, rules and expectations also can cut down on behavioral problems (Sandler, Schoenfelder, Wolchik, & MacKinnon, 2011).

Much of the attention currently given to improving students' academic achievement addresses issues of curriculum, instructional strategies, and interventions or services for struggling learners (Shaw, Connell, Dishion, Wilson, & Gardner, 2009). However, even after addressing these issues, barriers still remain for some students. An estimated one-third of students fail to learn because of psychosocial problems that interfere with their ability to fully attend to and engage in instructional activities, prompting a call for new directions for addressing barriers to learning. These new approaches go beyond explicitly academic interventions to take on the learning challenges posed by problematic student behavior and the ways schools deal with it. Approaches aimed at improving school and classroom environments, including reducing the negative effects of disruptive or distracting behaviors, can enhance the chances that effective teaching and learning will occur, both for the students exhibiting problem behaviors and for their classmates (Shaw, Connell, Dishion, Wilson, and Gardner, 2009).

Some teachers have a class in which one or a few students exhibit persistent problem behaviors such as those that are disruptive, oppositional, distracting, or defiant.
Sometimes when a number of students in a classroom demonstrate such behaviors, it can create a chaotic environment that is a serious impediment to learning for all students. In these cases, teachers have exhausted their classroom management strategies without successfully eliminating the obstacles to learning that problem behaviors pose (Shaw, Connell, Dishion, Wilson, & Gardner, 2009).

Every teacher experiences difficulty at one time or another in trying to remedy an individual student’s behavior problem that is not responsive to preventative efforts. Many effective classroom-focused interventions to decrease students’ problematic behavior alter or remove factors that trigger them (Loeber, Burke, & Pardini, 2009). These triggers can result from a mismatch between the classroom setting or academic demands and a student’s strengths, preferences, or skills. Teachers actively teach students appropriate social and behavioral skills to replace problem behaviors using strategies focused on both individual students and the whole classroom. Social relationships and collaborative opportunities can play a critical role in supporting teachers in managing disruptive behavior in their classrooms (Loeber, Burke, & Pardini, 2009). Classroom teachers, in coordination with other school personnel (administrators, grade-level teams, and special educators), can benefit from adopting a school wide approach to preventing problem behaviors and increasing positive social interactions among students and with school staff.

Behavior is learned (Markow, Moessner, & Horowitz, 2006). Children's behaviors are shaped by the expectations and examples provided by important adults in their lives and by their peers. In the elementary grades, general education classroom teachers are arguably the most important adults at school for the large majority of students. They can
play a critical role both in proactively teaching and reinforcing appropriate student behaviors and in reducing the frequency of behaviors that impede learning. Accepting responsibility for the behavioral learning of all students is a natural extension of the responsibility for the academic learning of all students that general education teacher’s exercise with such purpose every day. Understanding what prompts and reinforces problem behaviors can be a powerful tool for preventing them or reducing their negative impacts when they occur. The first recommendation emphasized teachers' gathering information about important aspects of problem behaviors in their classrooms; for example, the specific behavior a student exhibits, its effects on learning, and when, where, and how often it occurs. This information can provide important clues to the purpose of the problem behavior and a foundation for developing effective approaches to mitigate it (Markow, Moessner, & Horowitz, 2006).

When teachers understand the behavioral hot spots in their classroom in terms of timing, setting, and instructional activities, they can proactively develop class-wide and individual student strategies such as a change in instructional groupings, the seating plan, or the order or pace of reading and math instruction, to reduce the contribution of these classroom factors to students' problem behaviors.

Markow, Moessner, and Horowitz, 2006, believed that discipline means to teach. It does not mean to punish. Accordingly, it should be done out of love. Consistency is key. No matter what approach is taken to discipline, it is crucial to be consistent about it. In other words, this morning’s rules should also apply this afternoon. Be patient. No discipline strategy works all the time, but that does not mean the strategy is not working overall. Children need and want limits. Effective discipline does not stifle kids but rather
gives them a strong, dependable foundation from which to grow and mature. Discipline is not just about correcting what the child does wrong, but rather it is about celebrating what the child does right. The more praise and reinforcement for the good things they do, the more they will want to do the right things (Markow, Moessner, & Horowitz, 2006).

Many teachers lack the skill set to manage disruptive students. Twenty percent of first-year teachers did not feel adequately prepared to maintain order and discipline in their classroom (Markow, Moessner, & Horowitz, 2006). Prompting is a simple strategy that has been demonstrated to increase appropriate behavior and decrease inappropriate behavior. Faul, Simonsen, and Stepensky (2012) define prompting as encouragement or reminding of positive interactions. A report by Faul, Simonsen, and Stepensky (2012) explored the relationship between the presence (or absence) of prompting and off-task behavior of two middle school males in a general education setting. Direct observation to document the students’ on and off task behaviors and anecdotal recording to document the fidelity with which the teachers provided verbal prompting were the two measures used in this study. The levels of off task behavior by both students during sessions with a prompt were lower thus a functional relationship between prompting and student behavior was demonstrated (Faul, Simonsen, & Stepensky, 2011).

Children from low-income homes are more likely to exhibit delays in the development of oral language, letter knowledge, vocabulary, and phonological processing skills due largely to meager experiences and opportunities to learn (Lonigan & Whitehurst, 2001). Fifty percent of children in the more disadvantaged group performed below basic on the National Assessment of Educational Progress reading test (Lutkus,
The purpose of the study conducted by Piana, Volpe, Young, and Zaslofsky (2012) was to examine the effectiveness of Kindergarten Peer Assisted Learning Strategies (KPALS) with and without classroom management strategies (CMS). KPALS is a peer-assisted program that links higher achieving students with lower achieving students. The participants included 20 kindergarten students from one classroom in an urban elementary school in the northeastern United States. Results indicated an increase in engagement and improvement in students’ academic skills. Future studies should investigate the academic behaviors of both responders, students who received interventions, and non-responders, students who did not receive interventions separately (Piana, Volpe, Young, & Zaslofsky, 2011).

**Exposure to Violence**

Lynch and Cicchetti, (2010), examined some of the ways in which broader ecological systems may influence the organization of behavior within the family system. Researchers have begun to identify the effects of different forms of violence on individual and family functioning. Children were asked to indicate whether they had been exposed to a wide variety of violent events. Links between exposure to community violence and children's relationships with maternal caregivers were investigated in a sample of 127 urban children between the ages of 7 and 13 years. Results indicated that exposure to violence in the community constitutes a stressor for all members of the family system, and it can disrupt the organization of relationships within the family system (Lynch, M., & Cicchetti, D, 2002).

Despite traditional risk factor prevention approaches, violence, and social determinants of violence remain prevalent in urban communities (Allison, Edmonds,
Wilson, Pope, & Farrell, 2011). Several disconnects serve to weaken the use of evidence-based programming in community settings. Communities face the need to address the challenges of multiple risk behaviors faced by adolescents in their communities, but must also work to support successful transitions to adulthood and the broader positive development of their youth. In the National Survey of Adolescents, a study of adolescents ages 12 to 17, more than one third of the girls and nearly one half of the boys reported having witnessed at least one act of community violence in their lifetime (Kilpatrick, Saunders, & Smith, 2003). Efforts to prevent youth violence and promote positive youth development have been strengthened by the application of science-based prevention models designed to delineate a clear set of evidence-based practices (EBPs). Children exposed to community violence on a repetitive, ongoing basis can suffer cognitive impairments that lead to poor academic achievement and school failure (Saltzman, Pynoos, Layne, Steinberg, & Aisenberg, 2001). Efforts have been on identifying factors that influence the implementation and effectiveness of programs that focus on reducing youth violence and promoting positive youth development.

Interpersonal violence continues to plague the lives of children and youth throughout the United States and worldwide. Cohen and Jain (2013) reviewed the literature conceptualizing resilience within the context of community violence and discussed the theoretical basis for resilience in the context of community violence, described how resilience can be operationalized, and reviewed individual and community-level protective factors that can promote resilience among youth exposed to violence. Youth exposed to multiple forms of violence are often also disadvantaged economically and socially (Sanchez, Lambert, & Cooley-Strickland, 2012). Violence
tends to constellate in densely populated urban areas characterized by poverty, low economic opportunity, high residential mobility, physical deterioration, and social disorganization (Hawdon & Ryan, 2009). As risks accumulate at the individual, family, and neighborhood levels, likelihood of successful adaptation decreases (Jaffee, Caspi, Moffitt, Polo-Tomas, & Taylor, 2007). Building community and youth capacity through relationships may help prevent violence and promote resilience (David-Ferdon & Hammond, 2008; Zimmerman, Stewart, Morrel-Samuels, Franzen, & Reischl, 2011).

Children subjected to child abuse are often exposed to other forms of risk, including exposure to domestic violence (DV) and environmental stressors. This study addressed research on physical child abuse, domestic violence, the prediction of child outcomes, and resilience in children exposed to family violence. Herrenkohl, Sousa, Tajima, Herrenkohl, and Moylan (2008), examined associations among variables and indicators of child maltreatment or victimization. In 2005, approximately 3.3 million referrals for alleged maltreatment were made to child protective service agencies (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2007). From these, an estimated 899,000 children in the United States were officially documented as having been maltreated. Only a fraction of all abuse claims due to numerous acts of child maltreatment go unreported to protective service agencies (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006).

**Resilience**

It is not possible to protect children from the ups and downs of life. Raising resilient children, however, is possible and can provide them with the tools they need to respond to the challenges of adolescence and young adulthood and to navigate successfully in adulthood. Today’s families, especially children, are under tremendous
stress with the potential to damage both physical health and psychological well-being. The stress comes from families who are always on the go, who are overscheduled with extracurricular activities, and ever-present peer pressure. Luthar, (2003), ascertained that in today’s environment, children and teens need to develop strengths, acquire skills to cope, recover from hardships, and be prepared for future challenges. They need to be resilient in order to succeed in life.

Childhood is idealized as a carefree time, but youth alone offers no shield against the emotional hurts and traumas many children face. Children can be asked to deal with problems ranging from adapting to a new classroom to bullying by classmates or even abuse at home. Add to that the uncertainties that are part of growing up, and childhood can be anything but carefree. The ability to thrive despite these challenges arises from the skills of resilience. Building resilience is the ability to adapt well to adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or even significant sources of stress and this can help children manage stress and feelings of anxiety and uncertainty. However, being resilient does not mean that children will not experience difficulty or distress. Emotional pain and sadness are common when people have suffered major trauma or personal loss, or even when hearing of someone else's loss or trauma (Southwick, Bonanno, Masten, Panter-Brick, & Yehuda, 2014).

Some children are resilient by nature as their temperament helps them to be mentally and psychologically tough. These children are identifiable. They show resilience to a setback or disappointment. Rejection on the playground does not faze them. Unfortunately, not every child has such natural resilience. Resilient children share four basic skill sets: independence, problem solving, optimism, and social connection.
Psychological resilience refers to an individual's capacity to withstand stressors and not manifest psychology dysfunction, such as mental illness or persistent negative mood (Cicchetti, 2010). This is the mainstream psychological view of resilience, that is, resilience is defined in terms a person's capacity to avoid psychopathology despite difficult circumstances. Psychological stressors or risk factors are often considered to be experiences of major acute or chronic stress such as death of someone else, chronic illness, sexual, physical or emotional abuse, fear, unemployment, and community violence (Walsh, Dawson, & Mattingly, 2010). The central process involved in building resilience is the training and development of adaptive coping skills. A stressor occurs and cognitive appraisal takes place deciding whether the stressor represents something that can be addressed or is a source of stress because it may be beyond one's coping resources. If a stressor is considered to be a danger, coping responses are triggered. Coping strategies are generally the following: outwardly focused on the problem, inwardly focused on emotions, or socially focused. In humanistic psychology, resilience refers to an individual's capacity to thrive and fulfill potential despite or perhaps even because of such stressors (Rutter, 2012). Resilient individuals and communities are more inclined to see problems as opportunities for growth. Resilient individuals seem not only to cope well with unusual strains and stressors but also actually to experience such challenges as learning and development opportunities (Rutter, 2012).

While some individuals may seem to prove themselves to be more resilient than others, it should be recognized that resilience is a dynamic quality, not a permanent capacity. Resilient individuals demonstrate dynamic self-renewal, whereas less resilient individuals find themselves worn down and negatively impacted by life stressors.
Resilience is when individuals or groups adapt positively within the context of adversity and is observed when protective factors buffer or modify the effects of risks over time, including through dynamic developmental processes that may only be apparent under high-risk circumstances (Rutter, 2012). Researchers and practitioners must acknowledge and measure the achievements and successes youth attain despite overwhelming risks they experience, as they develop into caring, confident, and contributing adults. Resilience can be conceptualized in four domains: behavioral, emotional, social, and cognitive/educational (Walsh, Dawson, & Mattingly, 2010). Recognizing ordinary children and communities as assets holds great promise for combating major public health inequalities and transforming lives.

There is a fundamental shift toward understanding and promoting resilience at the family and community levels. Aisenberg and Herrenkohl (2008) ascertained the primary prevention of violence in urban neighborhoods would require eliminating underlying social and economic inequalities. Community violence persists as a major public health problem in the United States despite considerable attention from researchers, policy makers, law enforcement officials, and community-based organizations. Researchers revealed that adolescents are at higher risk for community violence exposure than are youth of other age groups (Voisin, 2007). A first step in preventing children’s exposure to community violence is identifying the salient risk and protective factors. Youth living within disadvantaged neighborhoods not only encounter a higher risk of violence exposure but also experience fewer opportunities for positive relationships and pro-social models than do other youth (Lynch & Cicchetti, 2002).

A study by Masten and Shaffer, 2006, evaluated the effectiveness of a behavioral
intervention for child behavior problems on family contextual variables that are likely to 
be related to child functioning. The study of risk and resilience focused on family 
contextual factors that are associated with child functioning over time (Masten & Shaffer, 
2006; Morris, Silk, Steinberg, Myers, & Robinson, 2007). While child behavior problems 
are the eventual targets of parenting interventions, the effects of these interventions are 
generally understood to be influenced through parenting behaviors (Kaminski, Valle, 
Filene, & Boyle, 2008). One of the most studied factors in the family context is maternal 
psychopathology, which can include features of depression, anxiety, and hostility. Study 
participants were 139 child parent dyads who were referred for treatment due to child 
disruptive behavior problems. The researcher’s findings presented evidence for the 
potential impact of well-designed interventions on the broader family context, utilizing 
multidimensional, multi-reporter data that span 3 years of post treatment follow-up.

**Perceptions of Administrators**

Schools are not organized to facilitate the provision of mental health services, 
therefore, the study by Goel, Herman, Puri, Reinke, and Stormont (2011) evaluated 
teachers’ attitudes and perceptions of mental health needs in their schools. A total of 292 
early childhood and elementary school teachers from five school districts completed the 
survey. Findings suggested that most teachers did not feel they had the knowledge, skills, 
or resources to make sound decisions about selecting appropriate mental-health supports 
for children (Goel, Herman, Puri, Reinke, & Stormont, 2011).

Another study, the Janus project, collected the oral histories of leaders in the 
education of children with emotional and behavior disorders of students. This report, 
which was the third in a series, reflected the findings that resulted from 15 first
generation leaders. First generation leaders are defined as individuals who have played active leadership roles. In this article, the first generation leaders forecast the future of the field and shared their advice to persons now entering the field. Although the Janus project recognized that prevention and early intervention are the best practices, they were not optimistic about society’s willingness to invest in policies that promote prevention (Kaff, Teagarden, & Zabel, 2011).

**Summary**

PBIS is a school-wide behavioral support system that has the potential to be implemented across an entire school, affecting all students, or to be implemented with a smaller group of students or even an individual. Through its multi-tiered approach, PBIS allows educators to identify students as low-risk, moderate-risk, or high-risk regarding behavioral concerns. Interventions to improve inappropriate behavior will be implemented by educators depending on the tier a student or group of students is placed.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions will guide this study:

1. Is there a greater improvement between 4th and 5th grade for those who receive the Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) program versus those who do not receive the program with respect to frequency of students who pass the FSA reading with a score of 2 or greater?

2. Is there a greater improvement between 4th and 5th grade for those who receive the Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) program versus those who do not receive the program with respect to percentile scores on the FSA reading test?

3. Is there a greater improvement between 4th and 5th grade for those who receive
the Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) program versus those who do not receive the program with respect to frequency of referrals for behavior disruptions?
Chapter 3: Methodology

Overview

School-wide discipline has focused mainly on reacting to specific student misbehavior by implementing punishment-based strategies including reprimands, loss of privileges, office referrals, suspensions, and expulsions. Researchers have shown the implementation of punishment, especially when it is used inconsistently and in the absence of other positive strategies, is ineffective (Dunlap, Hornor, & Koegel, 1996). Introducing, modeling, and reinforcing positive social behavior are an important step regarding a student's educational experience. Teaching behavioral expectations and rewarding students is a much more positive approach than waiting for misbehavior to occur before responding (Tobin & Vincent, 2010). The purpose of this study was to compare the impact of a behavioral intervention program on the disruptive behavior of 4th and 5th grade students (Treatment School) to a school that did not have a behavioral intervention program (Control School). Both schools are Title I elementary schools in South Florida.

When a student is repeatedly suspended from school, the ability for that student to achieve academically is compromised. Missing instruction because of a suspension results in the loss of time in class, and this often results in poor academic achievement. When a student falls behind academically, behavior issues become more of an issue because the student stops attempting to complete work and exhibits negative classroom behaviors (Tobin & Vincent, 2010). This vicious cycle could potentially lead to poor academic performance, failing classes, and dropping out of high school.

Creating a positive school climate and culture to foster healthy peer relationships,
communication skills, and a positive learning environment are essential for every school and student to develop and grow. Striving to create a community and sustaining a positive culture is a school-wide effort. The primary prevention tier of PBIS involves defining, teaching, monitoring, and rewarding a small set of behavioral expectations for all students across non-classroom and classroom settings. The goal of this program was to establish a social culture in which students expect and support appropriate behavior from each other and opportunities for teaching and learning that can be maximized. Students should experience the school context as socially predictable, consistent, safe, and positive (Tobin & Vincent, 2010).

The Treatment School’s mascot is an owl so the leadership team chose a “Hoot Reward System” established to yield tangible rewards. The HOOT reward system is a positive behavior support plan in which incentives are used to reward appropriate behaviors that support the school-wide behavioral expectations. The system of rewards has elements that are consistent across campus and offers rewards that are available at a variety of levels. The leadership team, faculty, and staff could issue “Hoot” dollars to any student demonstrating appropriate behavior. The students add up dollars at the end of each day and the homeroom teacher helps keep track of dollars earned. A five or ten-minute block was incorporated into daily schedules in order to support buy in of the program.

**Participants**

The researcher is employed by a school district that serves approximately 258,836 students in 137 elementary schools, 40 middle schools, and 33 high schools. The Treatment School and grade level were chosen because the researcher was employed
there during the 2014-2015 school year as a fourth grade teacher. This is a sample of convenience due to the availability of participants and ease of access (Creswell, 2012).

There were 901 students enrolled kindergarten through fifth grade during the 2015-2016 school year. The demographics of the Treatment School identified in this study mirror the community: Hispanic 57%, African American 39%, White .037%, and Asian .009%. Similarly, the demographics at the Control School are: African American 65%, Hispanic 21%, White 13%, and Asian 1%.

**Instruments**

The researcher used existing archival data located within the district’s school report system. The Treatment School’s 2016 Florida State Assessment (FSA) reading scores of fourth grade students were compared to 2017 FSA reading scores of the same students who are now in fifth grade in order to determine the effectiveness of PBIS on academic achievement. The researcher is presently a behavior specialist at an alternative middle through high school, and collaborated with the literacy coach from the Treatment and Control Schools when collecting data.

**Reliability**

Reliability ensures that the instrument was consistent with its outcomes (Creswell, 2012). The districts’ school report system was provided by the state and was based on the student scores from the state assessment. Creswell (2012) illustrated that test-retest reliability is a measure of reliability obtained by administering the same test twice over a period of time to a group of individuals. The reading scores for the students from the fourth grade Florida State Assessment administered in 2016 will be compared to the same students in the same elementary school who were in the 2017 fifth grade Florida State...
Reading Assessment to determine if PBIS influenced the student’s test scores. The FSA scores for the Treatment School will be compared to the Control School.

**Validity**

Validity refers to how well a test measures what it is purported to measure (Creswell, 2012). For a test to be reliable, it also needs to be valid. Formative validity was used to assess how well a measure was able to provide information to help improve the program under study (Creswell, 2012). The Florida State Assessment measures are validated assessments as outlined within FLDOE’s Assessment Investigation (2016) document. According to Creswell (2012) “when correlations range from .20 -.35, there is only a slight relationship, when correlations are above .35, they are useful for limited prediction, and when correlations range between .66 - .85, good prediction can result from one variable to another, indicative of a strong relationship between variables” (p. 347).

**Procedures**

**Design.** This study was a quantitative experimental design because the researcher collected and analyzed de-identified archival fourth and fifth grade discipline referrals and de-identified archival fourth and fifth grade scaled FSA reading scores from the 2016 and 2017 school years from a school (Treatment School) that implemented a PBIS and compared the scores to a school (Control School) that did not implement PBIS. The students and teachers remained de-identified.

**Data analysis.** The researcher collected discipline referrals and scaled FSA reading scores from 2016 and 2017 school years from the Treatment School and
compared the discipline referrals and scaled FSA reading scores from 2016 and 2017 school years to the Control School.

Research Question 1: Is there a greater improvement between 4th and 5th grade for those who receive the Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) program versus those who do not receive the program with respect to frequency of students who pass the FSA reading with a score of 2 or greater? In order to answer RQ1, the researcher calculated the change in the FSA reading scores by subtracting the average reading scores for the 2016 school year from the average reading scores for the 2017 school year for the Treatment School. The researcher compared the change in the reading scores for the Treatment School using a chi-square test.

Research Question 2: Is there a greater improvement between 4th and 5th grade for those who receive the Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) program versus those who do not receive the program with respect to percentile scores on the FSA reading test? In order to answer RQ2, the researcher calculated the change in the percentile scores on the FSA reading test between the Treatment school and the Control School using a samples t-test.

Research Question 3: Is there a greater improvement between 4th and 5th grade for those who receive the Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) versus those who did not receive the program with respect to frequency of referrals for behavior disruptions? The researcher calculated the number of referrals and the students’ scaled FSA reading scores using a chi-square test.

Data collection procedures. Upon IRB approval, the researcher collected existing archival data. The Literacy Coach saved data into a password-protected Excel
file. The Literacy Coach removed all identifying information and then emailed the password-protected Excel spreadsheet to the researcher via the district’s secure email server.
Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study examined the impact of PBIS on the disruptive behavior of 4th and 5th grade students. The goal of PBIS was to establish a social culture in which students expect and support appropriate behavior from each other and opportunities for teaching and learning that can be maximized. PBIS is a systems approach to alleviate negative behavior by understanding what triggers contribute to negative behavior and what controls will improve or prevent negative behavior.

Demographic Characteristics

The demographics the treatment school identified in this study mirror the community: Hispanic 57%, African American 39%, White .037%, and Asian .009%. Similarly, the demographics of the control school identified in this study are: Hispanic 24%, African American 58%, White 12%, and Asian .027%, Table 1 depicts the descriptive statistics of this study.
Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Control and Treatment Schools for Time 1 (2016) and Time 2 (2017). Gender, Race, English Language Learners (ELL), Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL), and Students With Disabilities (SWD) are included.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Control</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>54</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>43</td>
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<td>Hispanic</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>47</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>74</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>74</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>74</td>
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<tr>
<td>SWD</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis

Research Question 1. Is there a greater improvement between 4th and 5th grade for those who receive the Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) program versus those who do not receive the program with respect to frequency of students who pass the FSA reading with a score of 2 or greater? The null hypothesis stated that there would not be a greater improvement between 4th and 5th grade FSA reading scores at the treatment school but were rejected. The alternate hypothesis stated the results of the FSA reading scores would be higher and the scores were but not significantly. The FSA reading scores in 4th and 5th grade of the treatment school were compared using the chi square test. Table 2 depicts the results were not significant for Time 1 \(X^2 = .42(1, N=183) = .52, p > .05\) and Time 2 is 1.79(1, N=183) = .18, p > .05. Table 3 and 4 depicts the leveled reading scores of the treatment school and the control school in 2016 and 2017.

Table 2

Proportion of Students Who Pass the FSA (Florida State Assessment) Reading with a Score of 2 or Greater, Separated by School and Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Time 1 (pretest)</th>
<th>Time 2 (posttest)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment (n =109)</td>
<td>44.03</td>
<td>58.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control (n = 74)</td>
<td>39.19</td>
<td>48.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3

*Leveled Reading Scores of Treatment and Control Schools for 2016*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Reading Level</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>56.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>17.4</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>10.1</td>
<td>83.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td></td>
<td>94.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>109</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>60.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>82.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>94.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4

**Leveled Reading Scores of Treatment and Control Schools for 2017**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Reading Level</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Treatment School</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>41.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>65.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>81.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>96.3</td>
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<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>109</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control School</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>51.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>74.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>91.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>98.6</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Question 2.** Is there a greater improvement between 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade for those who receive the Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) program versus those who do not receive the program with respect to percentile scores on the FSA reading test? A paired samples t-test was conducted to determine if there were significant differences in reading growth for those in the treatment than the control school. This t-
test revealed findings that were not statistically significant, \( t(182) = -1.76, p = .07 \). Table 5 depicts the mean amount of students scaled reading scores in the treatment and control schools along with the standard deviation for 2016 and 2017. This result suggested that any differences that were obtained between the groups with respect to improvement in reading skills were due to chance.

Table 5

*Mean Amount of Students Scaled Reading Score in Treatment and Control Schools and Standard Deviation for Control Time 1 (2016) and Control Time 2 (2017)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Control Time 1</th>
<th></th>
<th>Control Time 2</th>
<th></th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( M )</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>( M )</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>296.40</td>
<td>25.60</td>
<td>310.40</td>
<td>25.85</td>
<td>-14.0(13.36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>285.72</td>
<td>22.95</td>
<td>303.18</td>
<td>24.16</td>
<td>-17.46(12.49)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Question 3.** Is there a greater improvement between 4th and 5th grade for those who receive the Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) versus those who did not receive the program with respect to frequency of referrals for behavior disruptions? Data at the individual level were not available. Thus, changes in each student’s number of referrals could not be examined. However, it was possible to count the total number of referrals in each school and use this information to compare the total frequencies of referrals between the treatment and control schools. It is noted that these comparisons were made without consideration of whether or not the students attended the schools during both time points. Thus, the samples of students were not completely the same for each time point (e.g., some students were enrolled at their school for only one time
Table 6 depicts a chi-square test of independence that was performed to compare the frequencies in terms of statistical significance. These analyses revealed non-significant differences in frequencies for both time 1 \( X^2 (1, n = 109) = .03 \) and \( X^2 (1, N = 109) = .87, p > .05 \). Time 2 is \( (1 N = 183) = .48, p > .05 \).

Table 6

Proportion of Students Referrals Separated by Time and Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Time 1 (pretest)</th>
<th>Time 2 (posttest)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment (n = 109)</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control (n = 74)</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

The origin of this study was based on the premise that when a student performed poorly on a state exam, administrators were quick to determine the student needed academic support without examining the students’ emotional needs. Once students felt they were safe and in a positive environment they achieved academic success. The concept of PBIS is to establish a positive social culture in which students could achieve both academic and social success.

Summary of Findings

**Research Question 1.** Is there a greater improvement between 4th and 5th grade for those who receive the Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) program versus those who do not receive the program with respect to frequency of students who pass the FSA reading with a score of 2 or greater? The anticipated results answering research question number one were the FSA reading scores would increase 4th grade and 5th grade upon the implementation of PBIS. The reading scores for the treatment school was .44 in 2016 and .58 in 2017. The reading scores for the control school was .39 in 2016 and .48 in 2017. The reading scores of the treatment school did increase however not enough to be significant. Similarly, the reading scores of the control school also increased but not enough to be significant.

**Research Question 2.** Is there a greater improvement between 4th and 5th grade for those who receive the Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) program versus those who do not receive the program with respect to percentile scores on the FSA
reading test? The hypothesis for research question two was the percentile scores would increase at the Treatment School receiving PBIS between the 2016 and 2017 school years versus students at the Control School who do not receive the program. In 2016 the mean of the treatment school was 296.40 and in 2017 it was 310.40 with a difference of 13.36. In 2016 the mean of the control school was 303.18 and in 2017 the mean was 303.18 with a difference of 12.49. The findings were not statically significant and any differences that were obtained between the groups with respect to improvement in reading skills were due to chance.

**Research Question 3.** Is there a greater improvement between 4th and 5th grade for those who receive the Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) versus those who did not receive the program with respect to frequency of referrals for behavior disruptions? The hypothesis was the number of referrals would decrease however; data at the individual level were not available. Thus, changes in each student’s number of referrals could not be examined. It was possible to count the total number of referrals in each school and use this information to compare the total frequencies of referrals between the treatment and control schools. It is noted that these comparisons were made without consideration of whether or not the students attended the schools during both time points. Thus, the sample of students was not completely the same for each time point (e.g., some students were enrolled at their school for only one time point).

**Interpretation of Findings**

Positive Behavior Intervention Support programs are being implemented into school based organizations across the country. PBIS is a system-based approach, which focuses on rewarding positive behavior as opposed to punishing negative behaviors. The
goal of PBIS was to establish a social culture where students expect and support appropriate behavior from each other so teaching and learning could be maximized (Tobin & Vincent, 2010).

The researcher’s assumption was FSA reading scores would increase at the Treatment School upon the implementation of PBIS. Findings indicated scores improved however not enough to be significant. Although the results of this study did not support the hypothesis that reading scores would increase upon the implementation of PBIS, the need for more social/emotional learning programs is evident. Students are entering schools with complex social/emotional issues that teachers are not trained to deal with. Additionally, schools lack the intervention programs needed to address disruptive behavior as classroom teachers do not feel they have the knowledge, skills, or resources to make sound decisions about selecting appropriate mental-health supports for children (Goel, Herman, Puri, Reinke, & Stormont, 2011). Bridgeland & Bruce (2011) suggested that more positive behavior support programs are needed at the elementary school level because many teachers lack the skill set to manage disruptive students. Through the implementation of PBIS, the Treatment School identified disruptive students and provided a support team, which assisted when the student needed intervention. First year teachers who worked in the school were offered support and behavioral strategies in order to keep the student in class as opposed to removing or suspending the student from school. Twenty percent of first-year teachers did not feel adequately prepared to maintain order and discipline in their classroom (Markow, Moessner, & Horowitz, 2006).

The results of this study were not significant however; the researcher projected PBIS would assist with changes in school culture, benefitting both teachers and students.
Behavior intervention systems are implemented by a large number of school districts across the United States in an effort to address negative student behavior and create a positive school-wide environment (Sugai & Horner, 2002). This study did not yield desired results however the assumption was teachers would work collaboratively in determining what strategies worked for each student so that students recognized the school as a safe place that offered assistance in any capacity. PBIS is a systems approach established to alleviate negative behavior by understanding what triggers contribute to negative behavior and what controls will improve or prevent negative behavior. Suspending a disruptive student from school causes detrimental damage to academic success. When a student falls behind academically, behavior issues become more of an issue because the student stops attempting to complete work and exhibits negative classroom behaviors (Tobin & Vincent, 2010). As a result, PBIS did not affect reading scores significantly over a two-year span.

**Context of Findings**

Bandura’s Social Learning Theory posits that people learn from one another through observation, imitation, and modeling. His theory explains human behavior in terms of continuous interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences. Children who demonstrate aggressive behavior have usually been exposed to it at home (Bandura, 1997). Often adults in the child’s environment reinforce undesired behaviors because the child will receive attention as a result of the behavior. Bandura and his colleagues initiated a series of studies designed to examine social explanations for why and when children displayed aggressive behaviors. These studies demonstrated the value of modeling for acquiring novel behaviors and provided initial evidence for the
separation of learning and performance (Bandura, 1997). Bandura's social learning theory stressed the importance of observational learning imitation and modeling and has had a significant impact on the field of education. Today, both teachers and parents recognize the importance of modeling appropriate behaviors. Some students may see their parents or siblings behave in certain ways and copy that behavior. The influence of behavior, environment, and person depends on which factor is strongest at any particular moment. Özdemir, Özdemir, Kadak, and Nasıroğlu (2012), stated that personality is the integration of characteristics acquired by birth, which separate the individual from others. Personality involves aspects of the individual's mental, emotional, social, and physical features in continuum. The understanding of human behavior can assist educators in understanding the “why” of past behavior. More importantly, understanding human behavior can, to an extent, predict, change, and even shape future behavior (Hersey & Campbell, 2004). By implementing PBIS in schools, it’s important for teachers to understand the background of all students while modeling appropriate behaviors and providing positive interactions to shape future behavior.

The majority of African American and Hispanic students who have trouble behaving in school come from single parent family units and are low socioeconomic households (Faul, Simonsen, & Stepensky, 2011). The students in this study all qualified for free and reduced lunch. Census data reported that more than half of Americans have fallen into poverty and that a child born into poverty today has a great chance of remaining in poverty (Reclaiming The American Dream, 2012). Children from low-income families are likely to suffer from emotional problems such as anxiety and depression (Huston, McLoyd, Mistry, & Vandewater, 2002). Children exposed to
community violence on a repetitive, ongoing basis can suffer cognitive impairments that lead to poor academic achievement and school failure (Saltzman, Pynoos, Layne, Steinberg, & Aisenberg, 2001). Disruptive behavior problems in childhood can predict disruptive behavior problems in adolescence and adulthood (Loeber, Burke, & Pardini, 2009). Therefore, the students in both the Treatment School and Control School may have a difficult time adjusting to PBIS based on previous school and personal experiences.

Additionally, in order to predict a person’s behavior, it is important to understand which motives or needs of people cause a certain action at a particular time (Hersey & Campbell, 2004). Pinpointing what causes students to act out can help the teacher intervene before it happens, possibly avoiding bad behavior altogether. Cicchetti, (2010), ascertained that in today’s environment, children and teens need to develop strengths, acquire coping skills, recover from hardships, and be prepared for future challenges. Children need guidance and a decision making process in order to deal with issues of society today (Creasy, 2008). Although PBIS provided the necessary coping skills, social skills, and decision-making, the teachers at the Treatment School had to first identify what caused the student to act out.

Some teachers have a class in which one or a few students exhibit persistent problem behaviors such as those that are disruptive, oppositional, distracting, or defiant. These are the students who should be targeted in order to determine what strategies needed to be implemented. Classroom behavior management strategies may include praising positive behavior, ignoring mild negative behavior, and providing appropriate reprimands and prompts for behavior (Evans, Sadler, Schultz, Storer, & Watabe, 2011).
Similarly, this study targeted not only classroom behavior but was implemented school-wide where the entire staff participated in PBIS.

The Treatment School had historically received a failing grade before a change in administration took place. The researcher projected many teachers lacked the skill set to manage disruptive students. According to McKenna and Flower (2014), school policies should address all evidenced-based practices that meet the needs of disruptive and disengaged students. Teachers that use positive behavior techniques in the classroom result in the students perceiving school as a positive learning environment (Mitchell & Bradshaw, 2013).

**Implications of Findings**

Although the results of this study were not significant, the findings indicated the implementation of PBIS into a school system was not harmful with respect to the considered academic and behavioral indicators. PBIS is a whole school initiative; its aim is to provide a structured climate and culture of expectations, guidance, and school-wide unity. PBIS is not a packaged curriculum, but an approach that defines core elements that can be achieved through a variety of strategies.

Creating a positive school climate and culture to foster healthy peer relationships, communication skills, and a positive learning environment are essential for every school because it promotes student development and growth. The study only analyzed the first year of the treatment school under new administration and the implementation of a positive behavior plan. Future study and revision of the plan should be revisited in order to determine what strategies worked for each student.
The control school’s results could have been based on a number of variables. The district has initiated more social/emotional learning support programs into low performing schools therefore, the control school could have benefited from additional resources in an attempt to lower suspensions. Regardless of design, positive behavior support programs are essential in order for schools to succeed.

Social and emotional learning combined with academics provides opportunities for schools, teachers, and students to create an optimal learning environment; however, for this to take place a district wide initiative must be put in place. Schools will need to develop social-emotional learning programs students need to become academically successful and functioning members of U.S. society (Thompson, 2014).

Character education in public schools has diminished over the years because the focus has turned to content area instruction and test scores. The implementation of a positive behavior curriculum is a greater need in schools today due to children’s lack of social skills and inappropriate behavior (Costly & Harrington, 2012). Schools are becoming a bigger influence in the development of children’s moral compass. Parents are their children’s first teacher and as children enter school, teachers join in the process of shaping their minds, attitudes, and behaviors (Bannon, 2008). If parents are unable or unwilling to instill a set of values in their children, the school is the next best place to do so.

Limitations

Rarely in the public school is curriculum given direct attention to the examination of values. The value systems that students develop are directly related to the kind of people they are and will be and to the quality of relationships they form (Trissler, 2000).
Many different outlets such as parents, television, music, and other external sources influence students. Creasey (2008) ascertained that character education is a program that can be implemented in order to turn students into respectful, responsible, contributing members of society.

There are barriers to consider when implementing a positive behavior support program into a school. The number and make-up of the students will be slightly different from year to year based on the transient population of students. There are also variations with administration as well as staff members assigned to different grade levels from year to year. Weekly school-wide incentives can be time consuming and large school-wide activities can be costly. Also, creating a reward schedule for the year can be challenging as well as obtaining teacher/student input for their desired rewards. Generating school wide support for the program is essential in order for the program to have desired outcomes. Most programs start off strong but slowly lose momentum as the school year progresses. In order for programs to be successful, constant revisiting and revising of the program should be taking place throughout the year with all stakeholders involved. Since this study is limited to one grade level and one school, generalizability of the results will be limited. As well, researcher bias is less of an issue in a quantitative study than it is in a qualitative study, however, special attention will be made to minimize this concern.

**Future Directions**

Successful positive behavior support plans are typically developed in connection with person-centered planning. The behavior support plan is the team’s action plan outlining the specific steps to be used to promote the child’s success and participation in daily activities and routines. In order to be most effective, behavior support plans should
identify any prerequisite resources and training needed for implementation. Research indicated improvement for all schools that implemented SWPBS with fidelity over time. Schools demonstrated improvement on all social behavior and academic outcome measures (Black, Eber, Lewandowski, Myers, Sims, Simonsen, & Sugai, 2011).

Based on the results of this study a number of future directions should take place. First, future directions should track students for longer periods of time. School staff, students, and families should set realistic goals for students receiving these supports, so that student success is enabled, progress can be evaluated, and staff morale is enhanced. Secondly, implementation leadership teams should start with a thorough evaluation of the students who demonstrate disruptive behavior. Thirdly, it is important to recognize that students with a magnitude of needs will most likely not act like their peers overnight. Fourth, school personnel must make decisions with the understanding that this group of students will require concerted and consistent access to resources. The purpose of PBIS is to reduce the intensity, frequency and severity of problem behaviors so students can function in the school environment.
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