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Disciplinary Referrals in Response to School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan in a Rural Middle
School Setting

A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership And Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

by

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August 2011

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Dr. James Lampley

Keywords: school-wide interventions, positive behavior support, discipline

ABSTRACT

Disciplinary Referrals in Response to School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan in a Rural Middle School Setting

by

Michelle Diana Rogers Harless

Students who exhibit disruptive and inappropriate behaviors are a challenge for schools, as teachers and administrators are most often held responsible for managing these behaviors. This study was designed to evaluate *School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports (SWPBS)* when used in a rural middle school setting. Research indicates that using *SWPBS* in an individual school over a period of time can decrease the amount of disruptive behaviors in the school while also increasing attendance and academic scores. However, little longitudinal research exists concerning the use of *SWPBS* within middle school settings across a system.

Through the use of quantitative methods, this study included examining overall effect on office disciplinary referrals (ODRs), suspensions, and expulsions under the 3 categories of schools as well as faculty and student perceptions (current year only) of *SWPBS*. While there was no significant difference found among ODRs, expulsions, or suspensions among the 3 school categories through ANOVA analysis, the study did highlight the need for further evaluation of how schools implement *SWPBS*. A one-way, chi-square analysis of faculty perceptions did not show a significance among the three school categories, while student perceptions did show significance and a follow-up pairwise comparison was conducted. The student survey analysis suggests that students in either a school with the *SWPBS* plan or without a plan are 3 times more likely to have a negative attitude toward the behavioral school policies than schools with a partial

SWPBS plan. The analysis on perceptions indicates the need for further faculty and student questioning in future research.

The primary significance of this study is that it addresses the use of *SWPBS* in various middle school settings and in various stages of use (full plan, partial plan, or no plan). This study also evaluates data from two years before the *SWPBS* implementation as opposed to just one year.

The study highlights issues related to middle school students and how school systems might better serve those students.

DEDICATION

I dedicate my work in loving memory of my father C.K. Rogers, Jr. You were a model of resiliency, reliability, and love. Your words of encouragement got me over the little bumps in the road. I wish you were here to see the finished work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my family—those who gave my strength, guidance, and unconditional love to help see me through this journey.

To my husband David, thank you for putting up with me on the days I could not even stand myself. I am blessed to have found you. Always.

To my son Josh, you are and will always be my special gift from God. I have watched you grow into a terrific young man. Thanks for providing humor breaks when I needed them!

To my mother Beverly Rogers for serving my home, spirit, and heart. You fed us, listened to my whining, and cared for Josh. You have been my lifelong example of beauty and strength.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A school with a positive behavioral support plan in place has a culture in that students and parents feel welcome and safe (Cohen, Kincaid, & Childs, 2007). Faculty at the school experience higher levels of morale and are less likely to look for jobs elsewhere. The community has a sense of pride in its school as well. In the end schools with positive behavioral support plans in place may increase attendance rates, test scores, and self-esteem for their students. These schools may also have higher retention rates for their faculty (DiPerna, Volpe, & Elliott, 2005; Konstantopoulos, 2006).

While most schools today are considered safe, it is important to understand that the climate of the school may not be a positive one. Key issues such as violence, bullying and drugs have caused the nation's attention to turn towards ways to make schools safer (Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice, 2001). Today's students are often greeted by metal detectors and resource officers; and while these objects may signify a safe environment, they do not necessarily guarantee a safe environment (Sugai & Horner, 2002). Administrators and teachers have felt the pressure to educate and graduate students while upholding zero tolerance policies and are left wondering if zero tolerance perpetuates a cycle of problematic behavior (Sugai et al., 2000).

The need to focus on school violence, bullying and drugs may be justified according to a 2009 report from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2010), although the perception of violent crimes is far greater than the actual incidence. The NCES reported 32% of middle and high school students felt victimized during the school year. It is important to understand that victimization does not necessarily mean having a weapon used against you. It

usually means acts of bullying, (i.e. hazing, teasing, or physical aggression). Victimization can also include theft, sexual harassment, and some instances of assault. Thirty-four percent of teachers reported that acts of misbehavior within the school had a negative impact on their ability to teach and their students' ability to learn. Teachers lose 6 to 9 hours of instructional time per week dealing with disciplinary problems (NCES, 2010).

In 2007 there were 767,900 disciplinary actions that occurred in public schools. Of those, most were for insubordination or fighting. Seventy-six percent of the disciplinary actions reported resulted in suspensions of 5 days, 19% were transfers to a specialized school and the remaining 5% were expulsions for the rest of the school year (NCES, 2010). Students from rural schools are five to six times more likely to be expelled than students from urban schools. However, it is unlikely that the crime rates in these rural areas are five to six times greater than those of the urban areas (Su, 2003).

School officials have a broad range of options at their disposal when enforcing discipline in a school system. In today's atmosphere where the majority of the people questioned list violence as their number one concern in schools today and with acts such as Columbine making national media, school officials may feel the pressure to enact zero tolerance policies (Rose, Gallup, & Elam, 1997). Other reasons for using expulsion include a time to readjust for the student, a warning for the parent who is not taking part in the discipline of a child, or an option for school administration to get rid of a troublesome student.

In the end does taking a child out of school help educate that child? According to the 2000 Census, children who are suspended or expelled from school are more likely to live in poverty and come from single parent homes (US Census, 2000). Children who live in poverty are more likely to be unsupervised during their expulsion period and receive no educational

instruction. These children are also more likely to become involved in neighborhood crime. The historic reaction of punitive disciplinary procedures instead of creating proactive approaches to such behaviors has only seemed to create more negative climates (Noguera, 1995).

Many students prosper in school, but some students do not feel safe and do not perform as well as they could in school due to the acts of other students. Also, teachers who have consistent disruptions in their classrooms cannot teach as well. In fact with almost half the novice teachers (46%) leaving the profession, it gives administrators another reason to look for ways to change the school climate. When questioned, many novice teachers responded that it was the environment caused by students that influenced their decision to quit (Kopkowski, 2008). High teacher turnover means millions of state and school district dollars spent on recruiting and training more new teachers instead of being spent in the classroom.

However, we cannot keep children with problem behaviors out of the school system. The stakes are too high in public education today. Expelling children with problem behaviors also goes against the federal guidelines under *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* and the reauthorization of the *Individual with Disabilities Education Improvement Act 2004 (IDEIA)*. Educators must find ways to make the school a positive place where learning can happen for everyone. *NCLB* forces administrators to focus on expulsion rates and give the students the opportunity to acquire the knowledge necessary to pass the state mandated tests (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

Two amendments under *IDEIA* that accelerated the use of proactive approaches in classroom behavior plans were (a) positive behavioral support and (b) functional behavioral assessment. Section 614 (d)(3)(B)(i) of P.L. 105-17 required individual education plan teams to provide strategies and supports, including positive behavioral interventions to address behavior that was impeding the child's ability to learn or that of others. Section 615 (k)(1)(B)(i) of the law

required local educational agencies to conduct functional behavior assessments and implement positive behavioral intervention plans before the child could be suspended. Also Section 615(k)(1)(B)(ii) stated the individual education plan team had to review and modify plans when necessary to address the behavior (Individuals with Disabilities in Education Improvement Act, 2004). Functional behavior assessments and positive behavior supports are not new in the realm of special education. The amendments have placed accountability on the school system to use the supports, especially in the wake of systems no longer being able to expel students with special education needs without the ability for them to continue to receive their educational services as stated in their individual education plans (Individuals with Disabilities in Education Improvement Act, 2004).

Federal initiatives, such as the one from the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control found that there could be effective positive behavior supports throughout a school if there were the teaching of life skills and positive monitoring with rewards in place (Thorton, Craft, Dahlberg, Lynch, & Baer, 2000). School systems started to adopt positive behavior supports school-wide, known as School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Plan (*SWPBS*). The components for *SWPBS* include the following:

SWPBS uses the following components within a school: (a) establishment of a planning team, (b) definition of school-wide behavioral expectations, (c) teaching of behavioral expectations directly to students, (d) development of procedures for acknowledging appropriate behaviors and discouraging inappropriate behavior, and (e) monitoring and ongoing evaluation of behaviors through a database (Sugai & Horner, 2002; Warren, Griggs, Lassen, McCart, & Sailor, 2003).

Statement of Problem

One way to improve disciplinary problems is with the introduction of a behavioral intervention known as *SWPBS* (Cohen & Childs, 2007). This program is centered on teaching all students the basic foundations of respect and responsibility. Lesson plans include respect for self, others, and property, as well as being responsible with words, relationships, and work. There are currently 9,000 schools in the United States that have implemented *SWPBS* and more are signing up for the program every year (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, 2010). Many educators and administrators believe *SWPBS* is the way to effectively solve misconduct during the school day. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the *SWPBS* program in the middle school setting from a rural East Tennessee school district by using a quantitative, evaluative study. Quantitative data were compiled through the Star Student Management System (SSMS) to measure the number of office disciplinary referrals (ODRs) by 6-week marking periods during each school year for a 5-year period (2005-2009). Yearly suspension and expulsion data were analyzed for trends. Schools were placed in three categories based on their School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET data) that measured the degree to that they were using the *SWPBS* program. Further quantitative data were obtained through faculty and student surveys to measure perceptions (current year only). Originally, the researcher sought 1,395 students and 95 faculty and staff members to voluntarily participate in the study but participation was lower than expected with 58% participation among faculty and staff (55 participants) and 58% participation among students (812 participants).

Research Questions

This study examines the overall effect on (Office Disciplinary Referrals) ODRs, suspensions, and expulsions under the three categories of schools as well as faculty and student perceptions (current year only) of *SWPBS*. Disciplinary data were collected over a 5-year period with 2 years of baseline data before program was implemented, initial year of implementation, and 2 years after the implementation. The data included ODRs per 6 weeks, yearly suspensions and expulsions, SET data, faculty surveys, and student surveys.

Quantitative Research Questions

1. During the 5 years under study is there a significant difference in ODRs among the three *SWPBS* categories of schools?
2. During the 5 years under study is there a significant difference in expulsions among the three *SWPBS* categories of schools?
3. During the 5 years under study is there a significant difference in suspensions among the three *SWPBS* categories of schools?
4. Is there a significant difference for the current school year in teacher perceptions among the three *SWPBS* categories of schools?
5. Is there a significant difference for the current school year in student perceptions among the three *SWPBS* categories of schools?

Significance of the Study

School systems are being asked by local, federal, and national agencies to implement proactive behavioral plans into their schools (IDEIA, 2004; Sugai et al., 2000; U.S. Department

of Education, 2001). In July of 2010 the Department of Education unveiled \$27 million in grant money for states to create in-school programs to prevent violence (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). This study could benefit school systems considering adding *SWPBS* to their discipline program. It also could benefit the school district that took part in the study. They could look at the study as an evaluation and decide if the funds and resources it took to implement *SWPBS* are working in lowering the number of major student disciplinary behavior referrals. If the study shows *SWPBS* is working, the students are more likely to be receiving an adequate education and becoming productive members of the community. If the study shows that the *SWPBS* is not working, the program will need to be changed or canceled in order to find a program that works.

Definition of Terms

This section provides definitions of terms in alphabetical order that are used in this study.

1. Office Disciplinary Referrals (ODRs) - Student behavior that consists of inappropriate language, aggression and or fighting, harassment, property damage, forgery and or theft, leaving school property without permission, display of gang related items or signs, bomb threat, arson, or possession of tobacco, alcohol, drugs, or weapons (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2010).
2. Primary Level - The first level in School-wide Positive Behavior Support that unifies the school through common language, practices, and consistent application of positive reinforcements (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2010).

3. Secondary Level - The second level in School-wide Positive Behavior Support that targets students who need additional supports such as a mentor and check-in (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2010).
4. *SWPBS* (School Wide Positive Behavior Support) - Expresses an emphasis on school-wide systems of support that include proactive strategies for defining, teaching, and supporting appropriate student behaviors to establish a positive school environment (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2010).
5. Tertiary Level - The third and most individualized level of School-wide Positive Behavior Support that is reserved for students who need specific supports for specific problem and academic behaviors (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2010).

Assumptions, Delimitations, Limitations

It is the assumption that all office disciplinary referrals (ODRs), suspension, and expulsionary data were recorded properly into the correct categories of the Star Student Management System (SSMS) software. It is also assumed that an adequate number of teachers and students participated in the surveys to properly calculate the true feelings or attitudes of School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports (*SWPBS*) in the rural middle school system.

The first limitation of the study is that all five middle schools are within one rural school system in East Tennessee. The school system has little diversity, so the results may differ from a larger school system in an urban middle school with high diversity. Next, the study reviews data from 5 years. In order to receive better statistics, the study should be prolonged to 10 years and be across different school districts with similar *SWPBS* plans. The third limitation is that external

factors such as home life are unknown for each ODR offender. The fourth limitation is unknown factors of how faculties are implementing *SWPBS*. This may have an impact on the effectiveness of *SWPBS*.

In terms of survey collection surveys were only collected from participants who chose to complete and return the survey. This could skew the faculty data because those who do complete the survey could show similar beliefs and similar teaching methodologies.

Chapter Summary

Limited resources, diverse families, and increases in school violence have decreased the effectiveness of many schools (Hughes & Hasbrouck, 1996). Teachers and administrators have added academic and social responsibilities through *NCLB* and *IDEIA* that have made it necessary to identify, adopt, and sustain effective discipline practices especially for students who present behavioral problems. One possible effective approach is to incorporate a *School Wide Positive Behavior Plan*. While there are various discipline approaches used in the school systems today, *SWPBS* appears to be the approach designed for the diverse classrooms of the 21st Century. This specific behavior support was first designed to use in conjunction with functional behavior assessments but is now being used school-wide to support and encourage adaptive behaviors. The purpose of this study was to examine the *SWPBS* program in the middle school setting from a rural East Tennessee school district by using a quantitative, evaluative study. Quantitative data were compiled through SSMS to measure the amount of ODRs by 6-week marking periods during each school year for a 5-year period (2005-2009). Yearly suspension and expulsion data were analyzed for trends. Schools were placed in three categories based on their evaluations (SET data) that measured the degree to that they were using the *SWPBS* program. Further

quantitative data were obtained through faculty and staff and student surveys. Originally the researcher sought 1,395 students and 95 faculty and staff members to voluntarily participate in the study, but participation was lower than expected with 58% participation among faculty and staff (55 participants) and 58% participation among students (812 participants).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (*SWPBS*) is used in over 9,000 schools nationwide (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2010). While there is a set system designed to help schools begin and incorporate the plan, this does not mean that school systems fully incorporate the plan the way it is intended. Understanding how school systems make these administrative decisions and how teachers and students respond to the steps in the plan are necessary to improving the quality of the school climate and, ultimately, student learning. Unfortunately, there have not been a broad spectrum of studies published on the effects of *SWPBS* especially studies with longitudinal data in a middle school setting.

This review of literature was designed to accomplish the following objectives: (a) trace the major disciplinary procedures, movements, and events in the United States; (b) study the nature of and influences on teacher beliefs and their relationship to classroom disciplinary practices; (c) study the perceptions middle school students have regarding discipline; (d) explore the major trends and research findings regarding *SWPBS*; and (e) examine the effectiveness of *SWPBS* through longitudinal research that is available.

Disciplinary Procedures in the U.S.

Thomas Jefferson argued that democracy could only be protected by a nation of independently minded, self-governing learners. Harsh punishment was also used at this time, but it was not used as a fear technique (Finkelstein, 1989; Hyman, 1990). Leaders in public schools saw harsh punishments such as corporal punishment as ways of helping children overcome

egoism or their own self-interest. They also promoted a duty toward others during this time (Bear, 1998; Mayo, 1988). Jefferson reported that he had experienced first-hand what happens when you provide students with the ability to self-govern. At the age of 82 he was called in to help break-up a riot at his model school of learning. His nephew and two other students were expelled while 11 other students were reprimanded. Brodie (1974) noted that this convinced Jefferson that harsher regulations were essential to education.

The American education system has been debating the role of discipline in schools ever since. In a 1996 Gallup poll, according to Rose et al. (1996) 98% of the public believed public school's primary purpose is to prepare students to be responsible citizens. At the same time, the public does not agree that the current methods of teaching discipline are working. In fact, 70% of the graded schools received a "C" or lower under discipline (Rose et al., 1996). Teachers and parents are not pointing fingers at each other. They both agree that discipline is a serious issue, and in a different study parents agreed with teachers that discipline is lacking in many homes (Olson, 1990).

The changes that have happened in communities, among families, and within the media have contributed to the frequency of discipline problems (Cherlin, 1988; Hughes & Hasbrouck, 1996). This has added pressure for schools to instill many disciplinary options that include (a) preventative strategies that include surveillance such as metal detectors and security guards, (b) deterrence through rules and policies, and (c) psychosocial programs. Still, schools report they feel overwhelmed when trying to face these discipline problems due to the progressive laws that protect education and civil rights.

The top disciplinary referrals include: bullying and or harassment, disrespect, and truancy.

Bullying and Harassment

Bullying generally means the attempt of physically harming a person or the indirectly harming of a person through rumors and making fun of someone. Victimization occurs over a period of time and the victim is perceived as not have equal power to “fight back”. Boys tend to be at the greatest risk for physical forms of bullying, but girls are more likely to engage in indirect forms of bullying through the spreading of rumors and teasing. Girls are also more likely to experience gendered-related bullying or sexual harassment. According to Sanders and Phye (2004) bullying victims seem to fall into one or more of the following criteria: (a.) Believe they cannot control their environment. (b.) Have ineffective social skills. (c.) Have poor interpersonal skills. (d.) Are less popular than others. (e.) Have underlying fears of inadequacies. (f.) Feel socially isolated. (g.) Are physically younger, smaller, and weaker than peers. (h.) Have difficulty relating to peers.

According to Sanders and Phye (2004) the bully will generally be quick to anger and use force sooner than others. He or she will also chronically display aggressive behaviors and act out in a revengeful manner. Many bullies come from unsupportive homes and do not have role models for getting along with others. They will create resentment and frustration among peer groups and have little empathy toward others.

Bullying is used as a means to an end, whether it is to assert dominance in a group or to get ahead in the lunch line. Those who bully see it as a way of getting what they want, that makes bullying an attractive behavior and difficult to change in the school setting. Regardless of the type of bullying experienced, victims tend to suffer psychological distress, depression and anxiety, low self-esteem, and avoidance behaviors (Carbone-Lopez, Esbensen, & Brick, 2010).

According to Pellegrini (2001) middle school transition and adolescent development appear to increase the occurrences of bullying in school. Pellegrini (2001) suggests that bullying is a form of social dominance. In studies where students moved from primary schools to middle schools the amount of bullying instances increased as compared to participants who stayed in the same schools. Pellegrini (2001) stated that this was from the need for students to assert their dominance in a new school setting. Pellegrini (2001) also noted that larger schools were more likely to have instances of bullying than smaller schools as well as schools that did not take proactive measures such as anti-bullying campaigns.

Because of the detrimental effects, great attention in education has been directed toward those who participate in bullying and the negative impact of their behavior on schools (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). Major concern about improving school safety has followed with an onslaught of bully-prevention campaigns across the country. A national survey of state departments of education shows that 39 states inform educators, parents, and students about how to respond to bullying (Furlong & Morrison, 2000) and 23 states currently have anti-bullying laws. This enhanced interest to stop bullying has come with an increasing number of intervention programs. Effective anti-bullying campaigns feature: (a.) a strong positive statement about the school's desire to promote positive relations. (b.) A definition of what bullying is. (c.) A declaration of the rights of all. (d.) A statement of responsibility if you witness bullying. (e.) Encouraging students and parents to speak up with concerns. (f.) A bully-victim policy. (g.) A plan to evaluate the policy. Rigby (1999) goes on to suggest that it is important to include a whole-school approach in an anti-bully policy.

Middle School Students and Respect

Youth development calls for the adolescence to separate from the adults while holding on to supportive ties. This is happening in the middle school setting at the same time teachers are often trying to exert greater control due to a large and less personal school environment that the students were familiar with in elementary school. It is a mismatch that may influence a negative reaction to the teacher authority. It should also be noted that our relationships are situated upon a broader context depending upon our national and cultural norms (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Social behavior is influenced by the familial relationships and the surrounding community, so the teacher-student relationship is affected by social systems outside of the classroom. The show of disrespect or defiance from student to teacher is one of the most recorded discipline referrals seen in a middle school setting.

Deutsch and Jones (2008) compared the school setting to an after-school program and how respect was shown. The study site was in a large, Midwestern city at a Boys and Girls Club. Seventeen participants responded out of the 24 who were asked to take part in the study. The ages ranged between 12-18 years old. Nine of the participants were girls and eight were boys. All participants were active members of the Boys and Girls Club and 14 lived in the housing project that was adjacent to the building. Each site had the same rules, but study participants found it easier to give respect at the after-school program. The participants also perceived that they were being treated with more respect at the after-school program. The study concluded that the after-school program provided the participants with more autonomy by allowing the participants to have a voice in developing the rules and presenting their case if they were found in violation of a rule.

Truancy

Truancy is any unexcused absence from school along with the number of days a student can be absent from school without being referred to the truancy officer. Each state has its own laws regarding the number of days allowed. Tennessee, state under study, does not have a definition for truancy and leaves it to the local systems to define. The state had a 70.6% graduation rate in 2005-2006 school year (Bye, Alvarez, Haynes, & Sweigart, 2010). The school system under study was 5% above the state average for the same time period.

Truancy can have many negative impacts on students. Students who miss school are more likely to fall behind in their academics, drop out of school, use drugs and alcohol, and be involved in crime. The community is negatively impacted because it alters the workforce and jobs available. Unfortunately, when students are disciplined for truancy they harbor feelings of rejection and alienation. They have feelings of disengagement and the pattern of truancy appears to intensify.

According to Hubbard (2005) students who are not in school due to suspensions or expulsion have further educational gaps because the more frequently they are suspended the more academic time they miss. A school culture that nurtures trusting and respectful relationships is an important first step in reducing truancy.

IDEIA and Compulsory Laws

The U.S. Constitution has reserved the right for states to set up their school system independently. While there is some uniformity in the establishment of public education, there is variation across the nation. The most far-reaching federal law that has ever been enacted is the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*. This law mandates equal educational

opportunities for all students with disabilities and details how the opportunities will be assured. Changes to *IDEA* has readdressed the problem of children with disabilities and behavioral issues and the reauthorization known as *Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Education Act* states that you cannot remove a child from their educational setting without the continuation of their educational services (IDEIA, 2004). *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* stated that by the year 2000 every school would offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning (Goals 2000, 1994). This became part of *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)*, that also says schools must adhere to certain attendance goals to meet adequate yearly progress. The compulsory attendance laws accompanying federal mandates have forced school systems to change the way they use expulsion as a form of discipline. Of course, research does show that schools with higher attendance rates have higher achievement scores (Konstantopoulos, 2006). In passing the federal stimulus in 2009, Congress gave the U.S. Department of Education \$4.35 billion to reward state efforts to close the achievement gaps. This was called “Race to the Top” and, among other things, encouraged districts to use research-based initiatives to improve academic achievement, attendance, and graduation rates (U.S. Department of Education, 2010a).

School Climate

The school culture or climate is one of the most important and complex aspects of education. Deal and Kennedy (1983) stated that culture acts as a lens through which things are viewed within the organization. Every school can have its own reality or belief system that is shaped by its history and by the people within it. The culture is influenced by the students and their social class. In this era of school reform it is important to understand school culture or climate and how it affects student learning. Students and faculty can carry negative or positive

beliefs concerning the school that will affect the outcome of student learning. The idea of doing something because you have always done it in that manner is not helpful to school systems today. Schools undergoing improvement need to look at the climate and decide if they need to cultivate a new culture.

Huntington Beach School is one such school that found this true (Shore, 1996). Starting in 1991 the school decided it needed to concentrate on changing the school climate and culture. After reviewing disciplinary referrals and other records, it found that many of the students who were struggling academically were the same students that had been issued office referrals. Faculty, parents, and students formed a committee to institute a plan for changing the behaviors in the school. Among the changes was one program called “Adopt-a-Student” that paired students who struggled behaviorally and academically with a mentor teacher. Huntington Beach School found that they were able to improve academic and behavior among students at the same time.

The Use of Discipline in Areas of High Poverty

Payne (1996), who has studied generational poverty for 24 years, stated that in poverty discipline is about penance and forgiveness not necessarily change. In poverty the offense occurs, the punishment happens, and forgiveness is given. Once forgiveness is given the behavior returns. The culture of poverty does not help to provide success in school because school requires a certain amount of self-control in behavior that may be difficult for students living in poverty. Some behaviors related to poverty include: disorganization, unable to complete tasks, not able to communicate properly (i.e. use of casual register in all settings), and laugh or show other signs of disrespect when disciplined.

Conger et al. (1992) stated that children who live in poverty are at a greater risk of having discipline problems in school. Factors that lead to this could include: harsh parental discipline, stressful family life, and unstable peer groups. While these factors do not characterize all the children living in poverty, the presence of these factors can help explain a greater incidence of discipline problems. These children are more likely to be suspended, expelled, or placed in a different educational setting. This is called exclusionary discipline. It is often used to punish unacceptable behavior and to promote acceptable behavior. However, high exclusionary discipline rates are associated with academic failure (Gersch & Nolan, 1994) and high school drop-out (Costenbader & Markson, 1998). Studies suggest that school factors may lead to exclusionary practices rather than student factors. Wu (1980) found that exclusionary discipline rates were linked to school typology and poverty. If the school was a large school with a high degree of poverty, there were more instances of exclusionary disciplinary procedures. Also, Wu found the disciplinary beliefs of administrators were different in schools with higher poverty levels when compared to administrators in other schools.

Middle School Students and Discipline

Masciarelli (1998) conducted a middle school study in urban Colorado and found that most students followed school rules to avoid negative consequences at home or school, to gain recognition at home or school, and to avoid legal consequences.

Another study conducted that same year showed that most middle school students who were given the opportunity to misbehave in class without the fear of consequences would misbehave. Supaporn (1998) videotaped class sessions of an ineffective and unorganized teacher for 2 weeks. He then showed the tapes to teacher and students and asked for volunteer

participants to recall what was happening during the incidents caught on tape. The class was a gym class made up of 14 seventh and eighth grade students (10 males and 4 females). The teacher had loose lesson plans that overlapped. His overall style of classroom management would be classified as casual. The definition of misbehavior for the student was doing something he or she was not supposed to do or not doing something he or she was supposed to do. Almost all students admitted to misbehaving during the 2-week time period.

Tobin and Sprague (2000) note the need for a highly structured classroom. The highly structured classroom has a clear schedule, expectations, rules, and routines. Students are provided directions, and expectations are explained and enforced through reminders and feedback.

Teacher's Influence

Brophy's 1996 study of 98 elementary school teachers provided common approaches teachers found acceptable to manage classroom behavior. For the study, teachers were given 24 scenarios that depicted 12 specific types of problem students. The teachers were asked to respond to these scenarios and to explain their discipline philosophy for how they reacted. Four of the 12 types of students were externalizing behaviors such as hostile-aggressive, defiant, passive-aggressive, and hyperactive. Brophy (1996) was able to identify 8 general approaches and 42 specific intervention strategies. The most common approach used with students showing hostile-aggressive, defiant, passive-aggressive behaviors, and hyperactive behavior was to control and suppress the student during the behavior. School psychology often recommends using praise, modeling, contracting, and social problem solving. However, it was noted as often being absent in the study. The study suggests that teachers understand the methodology behind

praise and support but tend to fall back on punitive punishment. This seems to be especially true in students that express externalizing discipline problems.

Dutton Tiller, Varjas, Meyers, and Collins (2010) surveyed teacher perceptions. These teachers were kindergarten and first grade teachers. The research found that the teachers (a) described themselves as extremely influential in the students' lives; (b) were focused more on individual punishment; and (c) were not very familiar with their school's behavior plan even though they had participated in the training. This brings up the matter of teacher or administrator "buy-in." No program regardless of how successful it has been found to be will work in a school if the teachers and administrator are not willing to implement it. *SWPBS* has been found to work well if you have the commitment of the key administrators and at least 80% of the school's teachers. One misperception that hampers the implementation of *SWPBS* for positive behavior supports like it is the idea that children are only praised or given toys when they do something good. Some teachers report that this takes away a student's intrinsic motivation while overlooking actions that need correcting. Proponents of positive behavior supports insist you are correcting offenses while providing positive feedback and reinforcing good behavior that has not been done in the past.

History of Prevention-Based Initiatives

Researchers have suggested behavior management strategies and classroom practices that support proactive disciplinary approaches for over 40 years. In *Technology of Teaching*, B. F. Skinner (1968) was one of the first to note public education's over-reliance on punitive procedures to control students. He also noted the infrequency of immediate feedback for student work and of positive reinforcement and the lack of well-sequenced curricula (cited in Worley,

Bailey, & Sugai, 1988, p. 12). Madsen, Becker and Thomas (1968) concluded through their research that establishing appropriate classroom rules and showing approval for appropriate behavior would help to achieve a positive classroom environment.

Silberman (1970) depicted classrooms as "joyless places" (p. 10) with teachers having a "preoccupation of rigidity and control" (p. 122) and a "slavish adherence to routine for the sake of routine" (p. 126). Silberman (1970) also suggested that silence and lack of movement resulted in more inappropriate behaviors. The study further suggested using behavior modifications that included clear goals to be set and more participatory activities for students.

Mayer, Butterworth, Nafpaktitis, and Sulzer-Asaroff (1983) showed that school climate and social behaviors were improved by adopting constructive proactive disciplinary procedures. The study included 18 elementary and junior high schools in Los Angeles County over a 3-year period. Using a delayed treatment control design, teacher teams attended training workshops for behavioral strategies that included role clarification, nonverbal behaviors, confrontation, and ways to reduce vandalism. The treatment was delivered following either 4 or 13 months of baseline. Each team met on a regular basis to discuss the process. The mean reduction to vandalism 78% and positive teacher-student contacts improved with students attending to more class work. Nelson (1996) showed similar results in his research that used ODRs to analyze the use of positive supports. The 2-year study consisted of two elementary schools that served a large number of disadvantaged students. Data from the school were compared to a matching school that showed that the school with a positive behavioral support plan had fewer behavior incidents and the teachers' perceptions were that they were better equipped to teach children with behavioral issues. Two programs developed out of the research on constructive proactive

disciplinary and prosocial procedures were Anger Management, Character Counts, and Civil Citation programs.

Anger Management in Schools

Anger can be the cause of some of the most serious school problems (Wilde, 1995). Like bullying, many children have learned ways to get what they want through their anger. They learn that temper tantrums will allow them to receive momentary rewards. Anger can also have negative consequences like physical and emotional sickness (Wilde 1995). Children need to learn how to express their anger in acceptable ways. Wilde's 1995 study concluded that adolescents tend to direct anger at one of the three situations: a.) Anger at self. b.) Anger at others. c.) Anger at the world.

Anger at self happens when students break their own set rules or beliefs. Wilde (1995) stated that they will become anxious, depressed, and angry to the point of possibly hurting themselves. When a student is angry at another, he or she will attack that person for his or her beliefs or values and threaten the person for who he or she is. The student's ability to think rationally will be compromised. Anger toward the world happens with a teacher's most difficult students. These students tend to become easily angered with everyone and everything when conditions are not the way these students would like for them to be.

Anger management uses cognitive, behavioral, and emotive techniques to help students see the error in their thinking patterns and control their anger. Because anger can lead to violence, educators have found a benefit in using anger management. Student who are in a safe and secure environment feel more confident about themselves. Also, students need to learn how

to work through conflict, and educators will have more time for instructing students if they are not mediating petty arguments (Wilde, 1995).

History of Character Education

In the late 20th century Lawrence Kohlberg developed the theory of cognitive development. He identified six stages of moral development through his work. Kohlberg was convinced that individuals learn these morals by going through the six stages and are best influenced when they are in a “just community” or a community where participants establish rules through a democratic process (Crain, 1985). In the 1980s character or moral development started to become more of a concern among public educators as well as the large majority of America. President George W. Bush marked \$25 million in funds for character education (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). A 2000 Gallup poll commissioned by Phi Delta Kappa found 76% of people surveyed wanted more ethnic and racial acceptance taught in schools while 85% surveyed wanted more drug and alcohol education in schools (Rose & Gallup, 2000). A 1999 cover story of the National PTA magazine was on social factors and their affect on a child’s ability to learn.

The most widely known character education program is *Character Counts*. All effective programs provide lessons on social skills, personal improvement, self-management, problem-solving, and decision-making (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005).

Zero-Tolerance to Youth Diversion

Zero-tolerance policies were implemented nationally to punish drug-related and violent crimes in the school system. However, policies were expanded over a period of time to include

less serious crimes that did not include student safety of drugs. There have been cases of zero-tolerance being issued for things such as defiance of authority, habitual profanity, and excessive tardiness (Sullivan, Dollard, Sellers, & Mayo 2010). Critics of zero-tolerance say that it targets the very youth who need to be exposed to a prosocial environment that the school system can provide. Sullivan et al. (2010) also pointed out that zero-tolerance is a direct pipeline to jail because it places the youth into the juvenile justice system that is an environment that perpetuates the same type of misbehaviors.

Researchers suggested the use of a Civil Citation Program or what is otherwise known as youth diversion for youth offenders. The youth would be issued a citation and would be expected to spend an appropriate amount of time participating in monitored public service at the school. The parents would also be expected to take part in a parenting course as part of the program. Preliminary findings from a large county in Florida suggest that the program is successful in reducing later delinquency and that there is the ability to have the social and personal needs of the student and family meet through this type of program (Sullivan et al., 2010).

School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports

There are many individualized strategies and systemic supports used under the umbrella of *SWPBS* to achieve important social and academic outcomes in school environments while preventing problem behaviors (Warren et al., 2006). The essential features for a successful *SWPBS* consists of a school-level team, data-based decision making, instructional focus of procedures and expectations, and the acknowledgements of student compliance. A successful

implementation of *SWPBS* will lead to a safe learning environment, enhanced social skills, and improved academic achievement.

The *SWPBS* program is a systematic approach schools use for behavior and academic success among students. It relies on the theories of behavioral science and is supported through evidence-based procedures (Carr et al., 2002). *SWPBS* has its roots from B.F. Skinner's theory of operant conditioning (Skinner, 1938). On *SWPBS*'s very basic level, the student is asked to act in a certain manner and then provided a reinforcer (a ticket, prize, or verbal praise) that will help increase the likelihood of the behavior happening again. A well-adapted program incorporates the proactive approaches with well-sequenced lesson plans along with the immediate feedback and positive approaches that Skinner discussed in the *Technology of Teaching*.

SWPBS begins with the adoption of the program, the establishing of the school-level team, and the training of the faculty. The faculty is trained in what would be considered major and minor offenses. As part of the training faculty are given specific definitions and scenarios for many offenses and are provided guidelines on how they are expected to handle situations. The training of faculty is an important element because student behaviors are perceived by the teacher (Dunlap et al., 2000). The teacher's perception can be influenced by the years of teaching experience and background. The training of faculty is designed to help with the consistency and reliability of ODRs. An example would be two boys pushing each other in the hallway. While one teacher may consider the event to be horseplay; another teacher may perceive it as fighting. Under the schools *SWPBS* rules, any students participating in shoving or hitting are taking part in a major offense. The students involved would be written up on a major office referral slip and sent to the office for administrative action. The offense would then be placed in the Star Student Management System (SSMS) for tracking purposes.

While there can be an argument made against using ODRs for the only measure of behavior because all behaviors are not observed or documented, they have been found to possess sufficient validity as a behavior measure and can be correlated with other indicators (Irvin, Tobin, Sprague, Sugai, & Vincent, 2004). Gottfredson and Gottfredson (1999) showed that the number and type of ODRs could predict further ODRs, violent events in school, and dropout rates. Two studies by Tobin, Sugai and Colvin (1996) and Tobin and Sugai (1999) found that two or more ODRs in the first year of middle school were a significant predictor of chronic ODRs throughout middle school. ODRs can also be used to identify patterns of concern in terms of school location, time of day, and subgroups of students to assist administration in making decisions regarding placement of supervision (Wright & Dusek, 1998).

When faculty are trained in disciplinary procedures, they take part in the process of setting student expectations. This is part of providing student supports. The program starts with supports for all students. These are your school-wide or primary supports and research suggests that 80% to 90% of the student population will be able to successfully maneuver through the school day under these primary supports. These primary supports include your universal interventions. The universal interventions can include a set of general rules, lesson plans for how all students are expected to behave, set consequences, a procedure to monitor data to use with *SWPBS*, a reward system in place and family involvement. Direct instruction on these expectations and routines happen at the beginning of the year, at the end of grading periods, and after vacation breaks. They should also be reviewed when the faculty deems it necessary (Wong & Wong, 1991). Teachers are also taught to use active supervision. At one time it was considered natural to see a teacher at his or her desk. Now, teachers are expected to be moving throughout the day. They are expected to be interacting with students and evaluating social

behavior as much as work (Latham, 1992). The interaction of faculty and students does not end at the classroom door. Many of the major disciplinary offenses happen outside of the classroom, so Latham states that it is important to continue the moving, monitoring, and promoting prosocial behavior outside of the classroom.

While the majority of students will not need additional supports past the universal supports, assessments and interventions are added to groups of students who are in need of additional supports or what is known as secondary supports (PBIS, 2010). These supports account for about 10% of the school population. The secondary level describes students who are at-risk for problem behaviors or those not responding to the primary supports. The secondary level must have an efficient and effective way to identify at-risk students and to partner the student with an intervention (PBIS, 2010). Many schools use ODR and academic data to make this decision. An example would be a student who is failing classes. That student may be assigned tutoring.

The intensive supports or tertiary supports can also be provided for individual students. Tertiary supports are usually only necessary for around 5% of the student population. Tertiary supports are the most individualized and are designed for students who show behavioral or chronic academic difficulties. Behavioral difficulties include behaviors that can be disruptive or dangerous. Chronic academic difficulties include truancy issues, lack of work ethic, social exclusion, and any other issue that may impede learning. The tertiary level supports include: (a) conducting a functional behavior assessment; (b) establishing a behavior contract between student and support team; and (c) daily check-in with mentor (PBIS, 2010).

SWPBS for Bully Prevention

Bullying and harassment have taken many forms in the past few years including cyberbullying. In a study by Espelage and Swearer (2003) nearly 30% of students surveyed reported being involved in bullying as either the perpetrator or a victim. A response to this growing problem has been the creation of Bully-Prevention in Positive Behavior Support (BP-PBS). The program takes the concept of *SWPBS* and reworks it into a three-step process to respond to bullying (Ross, Horner, & Stiller, n.d.). Initial studies have shown that it decreases incidents of bullying behavior and increases appropriate recipient responses to bullying behavior as well as bystander responses. A pilot study of an elementary school showed a decrease in bully behavior between 55% and 69% when the intervention was used. The BP-PBS program differs from other programs in that it takes the whole-school approach. O'Connell, Pepler, and Craig (1999) concluded that bystanders play an important role in the bully prevention efforts. Bystanders can provide the immediate feedback (i.e. laughing and joining in) that those bullying are looking for. The program teaches bystanders to remove themselves from the situation, thus not providing the immediate feedback.

Evaluation of SWPBS

Evaluations that have accompanied the implementation of *SWPBS* programs have identified three key issues relevant for future policy and practices (Horner, Sugai, Todd & Lewis-Palmer, 2005). They are as follows:

1. Most schools in the U.S. who are currently using *SWPBS* are not completely implementing the evidence-based practices associated with *SWPBS*. The schools surveyed were shown to be using less than half the basic features on average.

2. Schools are found to be more effective in adopting evidence-based practices associated with *SWPBS* when technical support is provided. School teams of five to seven individuals receive a 2 to 3-day training each year for 2 years. Surveyed schools who met this criterion have documented the ability to sustain *SWPBS* practices with high fidelity.

3. Implementation of *SWPBS* is cost effective. Schools able to adopt *SWPBS* and establish an infrastructure within a 2-year initiative process find no additional dollars to sustain the program. The cost of problem behavior in schools is a hidden drain on school resource. Surveys have found that schools without a proactive behavioral plan lose 9 hours on average of instructional time each week.

Longitudinal Research on SWPBS in the Middle School Environment

The American School Counselor Association (2005) said that the need for preventive efforts where behavioral problems are prevalent is acutely felt in schools today. Studies such as the one conducted by Wilson and Lipsey (2007) suggest that comprehensive school-wide preventative programs like *SWPBS* are effective in stemming problem behaviors. There are various studies that focus primarily on middle school settings that confirm the effectiveness (Luiselli, Putnam, & Sunderland, 2002; Smith & Sugai, 2000; Taylor-Greene & Kartub, 2000; Turnbull et al., 2002; Warren et al., 2006). Most research indicates that behavioral problems and suspensions decrease between 20% and 60%.

In Turnbull et al. (2002) an inner-city middle school in the Kansas City School district was studied. The study participants were 729 middle school students in grades 6-8. The study focused on universal supports and the tracking of ODRs, suspensions, expulsions, attendance, and standardized tests. Universal supports included the clearly defining three to five behavioral

expectations (be safe, cooperative, ready to learn, respectful, and responsible), teaching the expectations to all students, acknowledging students through regarding for good behavior. At this particular school the students were rewarded tickets for being good. The tickets were placed in a box in the office, in turn, the tickets were randomly pulled each day where the winning students' pictures were taken and they were allowed to choose a prize. The team process was evaluated and adaptations were made based on the data. The study showed ODRs decreased by 19%, in-school suspension decreased by 12%, and 1-5 day out-of-school suspension decreased by 60%.

Luiselli et al.'s (2002) 4-year study focused on the evaluation of the implementation of a behavior support plan in a public middle school. The setting was a 6-8 middle school in rural western Massachusetts in a community classified as middle to upper-middle class. The participants were 635 students and 45 teachers. The dependent measure for the study was the number of detention slips. The disruptive-antisocial behaviors were classified into categories such as: (1) disrespect, (2) cheating, (3) obscene language, (4) disobedience, (5) misuse of technology, (6) smoking, etc. The school formed a team of students, teachers, parents, and administrators to identify areas of concerns and form a set of clear rules. Students who followed the rules were given lottery cards. Lottery drawings were held per quarter during the school year. The research found that the number of students available for the lottery drawing increased while the number of detentions decreased. Over a 4-year period, the school went to 40% of its population being eligible through achievement to 55% being eligible. It also found a positive correlation between the use of a *SWPBS* plan with an increase in school attendance and an increase in academic performance.

Taylor-Greene and Kartub (2000) monitored a rural middle school over a 4-year period. The participants in the study were 500 students enrolled in grades 6-8. The year prior to *SWPBS*

implementation, the school had over 5,000 ODRs. The climate was considered to be a reactive one. The faculty established a team to create schools roles and expectations as part of their positive behavioral plan. The school used five rules: (1) be respectful (2) be responsible, (3) follow directions, (4) keep hands and feet to self, (5) be there – ready. This school implemented a “High Five” program that rewarded students for good behavior through the week on Fridays. The first year reduction in ODRs was 47% with a sustained 68% since.

Bohanon et al. (2006) did a 3-year evaluative study of an urban, ethnically diverse high school. The participants were 1,800 students within the Chicago Public School system. The school was monitored during the implementation phase and 2 years prior to the introduction of *SWPBS*. Leadership teams of 30 teachers were designed throughout the building. Rules and a list of expectations were compiled and made visible to the students. Four kickoff sessions were provided for the students to provide an overview of the program. Students were verbally praised and given tickets for being good. Two major celebrations were organized per year. Quantitative measures included a school-side evaluation tool, ODRs, and a climate survey. The initial reading to the report concluded that the *SWPBS* program had been successful, but the data suggest that ODRs were already decreasing before the implementation of *SWPBS* and actually began to rise during the months of September through March after the initial implementation of *SWPBS*. These results would question the reliability in the training of *SWPBS* rules and consequences as well as the handling of ODR data.

Smith and Sugai (2000) studied a seventh-grade male student having been diagnosed with EBD. The study was to compare his performance prior to the implementation of a self-management procedure as part of the PBS program and afterwards. Self-management requires the student to monitor his own behavior and to prompt him to maintain on-task behavior. The

participant was a 13-year old seventh grader in a self-contained classroom with normal intelligence and no specific learning disability, but his behavior is considered volatile. Four months prior to the intervention the participant was in the principal's office on 15 times for a variety of infractions. A functional behavior assessment was completed on the participant and from the assessment the following plan was developed. It was recorded by an observer when the participant talked out or caused a commotion. The participant went from a 30% on-task time during baseline to a 90% on-task time during the first phase of interventions. However, over the course of the intervention the participant dropped to a consistent 50% on-task time.

McIntosh, Horner, Chard, Boland, and Roland (2006) found relationships between academics and problem behaviors across grade levels. McIntosh and his colleagues' study focused on early elementary screening measures such as reading levels through the use of DIBELS to predict two or more ODRs by fifth grade. They found that low reading levels were correlated with high levels of ODRs by third grade. Students who continued to struggle with literacy skills were more likely to participate in problem behaviors to escape from academic tasks.

This relationship has also been studied at middle school and high school levels. Tobin and Sugai (1999) found a positive correlation between failure in high school and three or more suspensions by ninth grade. They also found a positive correlation between low grade point average and high rates ODRs for boys in sixth grade. A study by Nelson, Benner, Lane, and Smith (2004) demonstrated that students with severe problem behavior experienced large academic deficits when compared to peers. In comparison, Fleming, Harachi, Cortes, Abbott, and Catalano (2004) and Lee, Sugai, and Horner (1999) suggested in their research that students whose reading levels improved between third and sixth grade were involved in significantly

fewer problem behaviors by seventh grade. Luiselli et al. (2005) found improved standardized test scores for reading comprehension and math. This study was in an urban school. The study found reading comprehension increased by 18 percentage points and math by 25 percentage points.

Problem behavior does not solely lead to poor literacy and poor literacy does not lead to problem behaviors; however, the studies suggest that we cannot overlook that one does affect the other. Further research is necessary to analyze the benefits of improving the behavioral climate of the school to make instruction more effective.

Putnam, Luiselli, Handler, and Jefferson (2003) noted that using ODRs to select and evaluate *SWPBS* or classroom interventions can be useful but should not be used independently. Their study noted the advantage of using a common tool such as the ODR to look at rate of occurrences, time, and problem areas. ODRs can provide staff a quick way to make informed decisions on where to focus intervention efforts. However, ODRs do not answer some questions such as why the behavior is happening to begin with. It also does not take into account the classroom management philosophies of the teachers that can affect the reliability of the measure.

Chapter Summary

Throughout the history of American education there has been a philosophical debate on the type of disciplinary procedures used to achieve the desired behaviors necessary for classroom learning. The goal of education has always been to prepare children for adulthood. To do this educators train students for careers through both academic and moral education for the betterment of society. When society's norms shift, it is left up to education to control these shifts. As the safety has been threatened in our schools, school administrators have been called on to

find ways to make schools safer. Increased attention has also been directed toward academic achievement following *A Nation at Risk* (1984) and the reauthorizations of *NCLB* and *IDEIA*. School administrators today find themselves looking for evidence-based curriculum that is proven to direct students in proactive behavioral plans. Research on proactive behavioral plans have found (1) that punishment and exclusionary practices are ineffective, (2) effective instruction is linked to reduced behavior problems, (3) school-wide systems can be an efficient system for reducing the incidence of disruptive and antisocial behavior in schools. Proactive behavioral support plans show promise in eliminating hours spent dealing with problem behaviors that take teacher and student out of the classroom. Research has shown that more time under classroom instruction equals a higher percentage of proficient test scores.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine *School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS)* programs in five middle school settings in a rural East Tennessee school district. The study focused on the process of using proactive behavior supports through *SWPBS* versus using other disciplinary measures. This study examines the overall effect on office disciplinary referrals (ODRs), suspensions, and expulsions under the three categories of schools as well as faculty and student perceptions (current year only) of *SWPBS*. Disciplinary data have been collected over a 5-year period with 2 years of baseline data before the program was implemented, initial year of implementation, and 2 years after the implementation. The data include ODRs per 6 weeks, yearly suspensions and expulsions, the School Wide Evaluation Tool (SET data), faculty surveys, and student surveys.

Quantitative Research Questions

1. During the 5 years under study is there a significant difference in ODRs among the three *SWPBS* categories of schools?
2. During the 5 years under study is there a significant difference in expulsions among the three *SWPBS* categories of schools?
3. During the 5 years under study is there a significant difference in suspensions among the three *SWPBS* categories of schools?

4. Is there a significant difference for the current school year in teacher perceptions among the three *SWPBS* categories of schools?
5. Is there a significant difference for the current school year in student perceptions among the three *SWPBS* categories of schools?

The researcher sought to evaluate the school system's success of the *SWPBS* program by using a quantitative evaluative study. Quantitative data were compiled through SSMS to measure the number of ODRs by 6-week marking periods during each school year for a five-year period (2005-2009). The first 2 years of data reflected a time period when *SWPBS* was not used (baseline). The third year reflected the transition year when *SWPBS* was being implemented and the last 2 years of data reflected the time period when *SWPBS* was in full implementation. Yearly suspension and expulsion data were analyzed for trends. Further quantitative data were used in the form of a survey to determine the structure of the program and the opinions and attitudes of school personnel on how effective the program was for the individual school. Another survey was used to gather data from the student population on their opinions and knowledge about the *SWPBS* program. School evaluations known as SET data were also analyzed by the researcher to assess the degree at that the individual schools were using the *SWPBS* program.

Procedures

Population

There were five middle schools studied. The five schools were placed in an *SWPBS* category based on their School Evaluation Tool or SET data. The SET data is a tool used to evaluate the degree that the individual school is implementing the *SWPBS* program. The

evaluation includes the use of a faculty *SWPBS* team, the systematic recording of disciplinary data, the teaching of four to five general school rules, and the lesson plans of specific expectations. Based on the evaluation, the school was classified as: (1) having the plan in place, (2) having the plan partially in place, or (3) plan not in place.

The quantitative population for this study came from schools in a rural east Tennessee county with middle grades 6 through 8. Originally the researcher sought 1,395 students and 95 faculty and staff members to voluntarily participate in the study, but participation was lower than expected with 58% participation among faculty and staff (55 participants) and 58% participation among students (812 participants). Table 1 shows the population per school and that schools A and C (as shown by the *) are small, K-12 schools.

Table 1

School Demographic Data

School	Population	% White	% Economically Disadvantaged	Attendance Rate	Promotion Rate
*School A	386	99.2	75.3	94.7%	94.9%
School B	680	97.0	56.0	94.2%	98.3%
*School C	150	100.0	93.6	94.1%	98.1%
School D	488	96.6	80.0	93.4%	98.2%
School E	319	96.9	67.9	94.5%	100.0%
Total	2,023	97.3	69.3	94.1%	97.9%

For the purpose of this study, their middle grades data were the only data used. The table shows that the majority of the population for all schools is Caucasian. The promotion rate and attendance rate for all schools met the state requirement. All schools were over 50% economically disadvantaged.

Instrumentation

The faculty and student surveys (Appendix A and B) consisted of 10 questions on a five-point Likert scale that respondents answered based on what best aligns with their views. The answers are in the order of the following: strongly disagree, disagree, unsure, agree, and strongly agree. The answers were combined into two nominal categories. Totals of 25 or less had a more negative feeling toward the school's behavioral policies while and 26 or more had a positive feeling toward the school's behavioral policies. The SSMS data were pulled for 5 years; the 2 years before *SWPBS* was implemented, the implementation year, and the 2 years after the implementation.

Data Collection

The office disciplinary referrals (ODRs), suspensions, and expulsion data were obtained from archival disciplinary records maintained by the schools. The ODRs, suspensions, and expulsion data were recorded per 6 weeks in the Star Student Management System (SSMS). The system is a computerized data system that each of the participating schools used for recording disciplinary offenses and consequences. ODR data were collected to be analyzed per 6 weeks while suspensions and expulsions were analyzed for yearly trends.

A letter was sent to the director of schools to gain permission to survey the faculty and students in the middle schools. The researcher obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at East Tennessee State University prior to data collection (see Appendix H). When approval was received from both the IRB and the director of schools (Appendix D), the researcher distributed the surveys.

The questionnaire for faculty consisted of 10 questions. The questionnaire was adapted from the Effective Behavior Support Survey version 2.0 by Horner, Surgai, and Todd. Permission was granted to use the survey by Sprague, Co-Director of the University of Oregon Violence and Destructive Behavior Institute as well as the main researcher, Homer. This institute funded the research on Positive Behavior Supports through a grant (Appendix G). The questions focused on the establishment of rules, procedures, reward system, and safety. The survey for students was compiled by the researcher based on texts, related questionnaires, and through consultation. The questions focused on the knowledge of rules, procedures, reward system, and the general feeling of safety within the schools. A parent letter (Appendix E) was sent home 2 days prior to the student survey to obtain parental permission. The parents were instructed to return the form if they did not wish for their child to take part in the survey. A child assent form was also given to the students before the survey in they were informed of their rights to not take part in the survey or to withdraw from the survey at any time. The researcher provided the faculty and student surveys to the school principals. The student assent forms and surveys were given to students during their related arts class time. The researcher obtained the faculty and student surveys from the principal after the surveys were completed.

The SET data for the individual schools were obtained through the Central Office. The SET data is the evaluation tool used to assess if the school has the *SWPBS* in place, partially in place, or not in place.

Data Analysis

A descriptive linear graph was used to explain changes in each category of schools for ODRs, expulsions, and suspensions over the 5-year period. The dependent variables are the number of ODRs per student population for each school per 6 weeks period and the number of yearly suspensions and expulsions. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to assess whether any differences exist among the three categories of schools reported during the 5-year period under study using SPSS v. 16.0 (Green & Salkind, 2007). An ANOVA was conducted to assess whether means on a dependent variable are significantly different among groups. The independent variable, the *SWPBS* plan, included three levels: in place, partially in place, no longer in use. The dependent variable was the change in the number of ODRs reported per 6 weeks marking period per individual school, yearly suspensions, and yearly expulsions. A one way chi-square analysis was conducted to determine if differences exist among faculty perceptions of *SWPBS* among the three categories of schools. A one way chi-square analysis was conducted to determine if differences exist among student perceptions of *SWPBS* among the three categories of schools. A chi-square evaluates whether the proportions of individuals who fall into categories of a variable are equal to hypothesized values. The variables may have two or more categories. The independent variable was the *SWPBS* plan and included three levels: in place, partially in place, not in use. The dependent variable was the nominal value (less than 25 disagree/26 or more agree) derived by the faculty or student survey that stated how strongly the

individual felt that the school's environment was positive and safe. (This analysis is for current year only).

Chapter Summary

The researcher sought to evaluate the school system's success of the *SWPBS* program by using a quantitative evaluative study. Quantitative data were compiled through SSMS to measure the number of ODRs by 6-week marking periods during each school year for a 5-year period (2005-2009). The first 2 years of data reflected a time period when *SWPBS* was not used (baseline). The third year reflected the transition year when *SWPBS* was being implemented and the last 2 years of data reflected the time period when *SWPBS* was in full implementation. Yearly suspension and expulsion data were analyzed for trends. Further quantitative data were used in the form of a survey to determine the structure of the program and the opinions and attitudes of school personnel on how effective the program was to the individual school. Another survey was used to gather data from the student population on their opinions and knowledge about the *SWPBS* program. School evaluations known as SET data were also analyzed by the researcher to assess the degree at that the individual schools were using the *SWPBS* program.

A descriptive linear graph was used to explain changes in each category of schools for ODRs, expulsions, and suspensions over the 5-year period. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to assess whether any differences exists among the three categories of schools reported during the 5-year period under study. A one way chi-square analysis was conducted to determine if differences exist among faculty perceptions of *SWPBS* among the three categories of schools and another one way chi-square analysis was conducted was

conducted to determine if differences exist among student perceptions of *SWPBS* among the three categories of schools. The results of data analysis are presented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine *School-Wide Positive Behavior Support programs (SWPBS)* in five middle school settings in a rural East Tennessee school district. The study focused on the process of using proactive behavior supports through *SWPBS* versus using other disciplinary measures. This chapter addresses the findings of the study. The data analysis targeted 1,395 students, the total student population in grades sixth through eighth for the county. Originally the researcher sought the 1,395 students and 95 faculty and staff members to voluntarily participate in the study but participation was lower than expected with 58% participation among faculty and staff (55 participants) and 58% participation among students (812 participants). An observation tool with previous School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET) data was also analyzed.

The county labeled a school inclusive as having the primary *SWPBS* program in place if it met the SET criteria by at least 80%. The program was partially in place if the criterion was met between 67% and 79% inclusive. The school was described as not having a program if the criterion was not met at least 66% of the time. The SET criteria included the school having an *SWPBS* committee, using tangible rewards when rules were obeyed, discussing office disciplinary referrals (ODRs) and children needing special behavior supports during faculty meetings, having *SWPBS* reward days for students, and tracking the amount of ODRs and tangible rewards given during each marking period. The school with no plan in place did not have school-wide rules posted throughout the school in ways that students could understand

them. The school did not have a plan in place to document rewarding behavioral expectations. The school did not have an *SWPBS* team that met regularly and shared behavioral data with faculty. The two schools with partial plans were similar in that they needed to establish a clearer understanding of the role the *SWPBS* team played in the school and they needed to develop more specific positive behavior lesson plans. The two schools that have a full *SWPBS* plan were shown under the SET observation tool to have specific rules and lesson plans associated with those rules, copies of crisis plan readily available, nearly 100 % of staff and students can state the school-wide rules, an *SWPBS* team with the majority of staff recognizing members of the team, and time set aside in faculty meetings to discuss behavior data.

The 5-year study included data retrieved from the school district's *SWPBS* program data, (ODRs), and expulsion and suspensions from 2005 – 2009 inclusive. Each school's ODR data were analyzed per 6 weeks. Because enrollment numbers varied from year to year, data were collected based on student enrollment to account for the attrition. The data analyses were calculated as the number of ODRs, suspensions, and expulsions divided by the number of students enrolled to control for the changes in yearly enrollment.

Research Questions

This study examines the effect on ODRs, suspensions, and expulsions under the three categories of schools as well as faculty and student perceptions (current year only) of *SWPBS*. Disciplinary data have been collected over a 5-year period with 2 years of baseline data before program was implemented, initial year of implementation and 2 years after to implementation. The data include ODRs per 6 weeks, yearly suspensions and expulsions, SET data, faculty surveys, and student surveys.

Quantitative Research Question

Research Question 1. During the 5 years under study is there a significant difference in ODRs among the three *SWPBS* categories of schools?

Figure 1 illustrates the average percentage of ODRs per 6 weeks based on the school category during the Baseline period and on the *SWPBS* period. A score was derived for ODRs by calculating the average number of ODRs for the two baseline periods and the average number of ODRs for the *SWPBS* period. It is observable from the descriptive line graph that schools with the plan in place averaged fewer ODRs throughout both the Baseline period and the *SWPBS* period. Regardless of the school category, there was a consistency in the amount of ODRs reported with lower ODR rates reported during the first, fourth, and sixth grading periods.

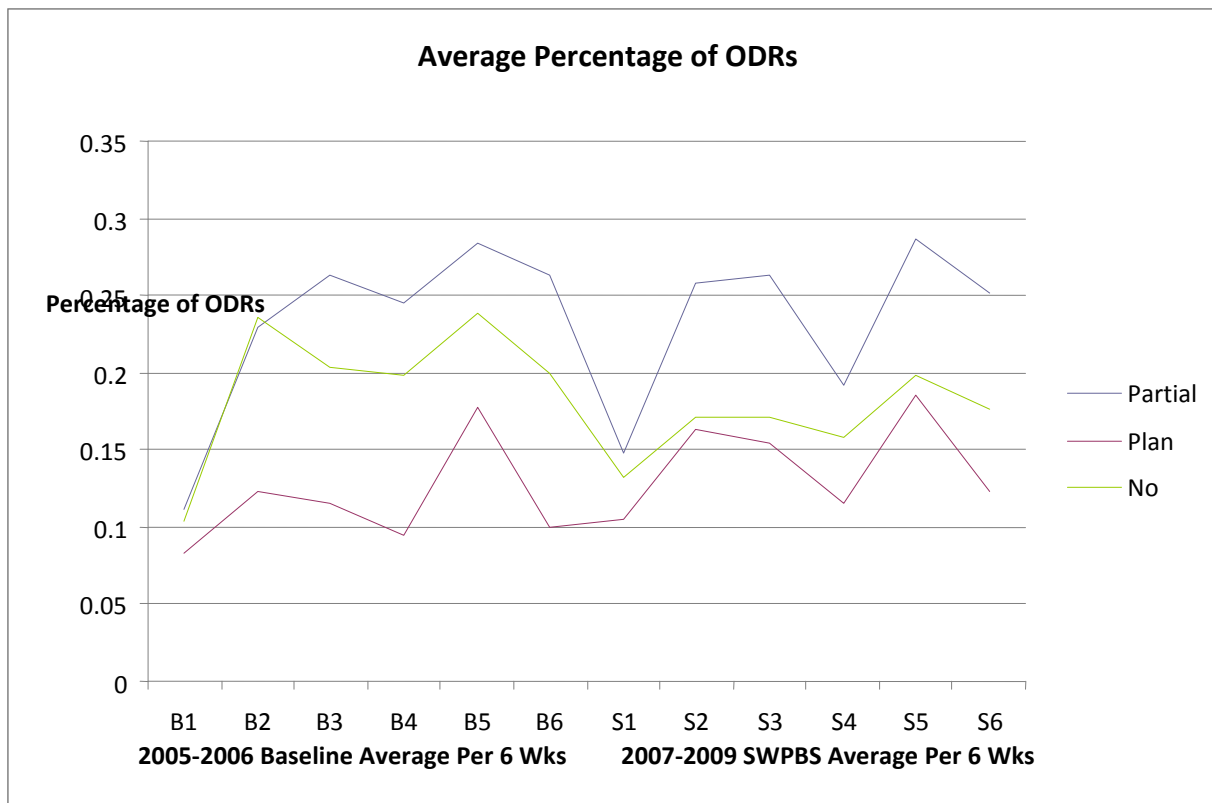


Figure 1. Average Percentage of ODRs given during the Baseline Period and During the *SWPBS* Period for the Three School Categories.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the relationship between the *SWPBS* plan and the rate of ODRs per 6 weeks grading period. The independent variable, the *SWPBS* plan, included three categories: a plan in place, a partial plan, and no plan. The dependent variables are the number of ODRs per student population for each 6 weeks period. None of the differences were significant. Respectively $F(2,4)=.26, p=.793$, $F(2,4)=3.67, p=.214$, $F(2,4)=.31, p=.766$, $F(2,4)=.44, p=.695$, $F(2,4)=.06, p=.944$, and $F(2,4)=.23, p=.815$. Therefore, there were no significant differences in ODRs among the three *SWPBS* categories of schools. Table 2 also shows $p > .05$ for each category and therefore no follow-up tests were conducted.

Table 2

Means, Deviations, Frequency, and Significance Between Plans

<i>SWPBS</i> Category	M	SD	F	P
First 6 Weeks / Between Groups			.26	.793
Partial Plan	-.04	.03		
Plan	-.02	.01		
No Plan	-.03			

Second 6 Weeks / Between Groups			3.67	.214
Partial Plan	-.03	.05		
Plan	-.04	.01		
No Plan	.07			

Third 6 Weeks / Between Groups			.31	.766
Partial Plan	.001	.09		
Plan	-.04	.06		
No Plan	.03			

Fourth 6 Weeks / Between Groups			.44	.695
Partial Plan	.08	.06		
Plan	-.02	.09		
No Plan	.04			

Fifth 6 Weeks / Between Groups			.06	.944
Partial Plan	.08	.06		
Plan	-.01	.14		
No Plan	.003			

Sixth 6 Weeks / Between Groups			.23	.815
Partial Plan	.01	.05		
Plan	-.02	.08		
No Plan	.02			

Research Question 2. During the 5 years under study is there a significant difference in expulsions among the three *SWPBS* categories of schools?

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the relationship between the *SWPBS* plan and the rate of expulsions per year. The independent variable, the *SWPBS* plan, included three categories: a plan in place, a partial plan, and no plan. The dependent variables are the number of expulsions per year. None of the differences were significant. Respectively, $F(2,4)=.60, p=.625$, $F(2,4)=1.40, p=.417$, $F(2,4)=.60, p=.625$, $F(2,4)=.60, p=.625$, and $F(2,4)=.32, p=.756$. Therefore, there were no significant differences in expulsions among the three *SWPBS* categories of schools. Table 3 also shows $p > .05$ for each category and therefore no follow-up tests were conducted.

Table 3

Means for Expulsions per School and Significance Between Plans for Expulsions

Year	Means	P
Expulsions Year 1	.60	.625
Expulsions Year 2	1.40	.417
Expulsions Year 3	.60	.625
Expulsions Year 4	.60	.625
Expulsions Year 5	.32	.756

As shown in Figure 2, the rates of expulsions were small and inconsistent (between 0-3 per year) It was noted that the schools with a partial plan were more likely to expel students than

those who had a plan or no plan. There were some years that schools did not expel any students regardless of behavior plan.

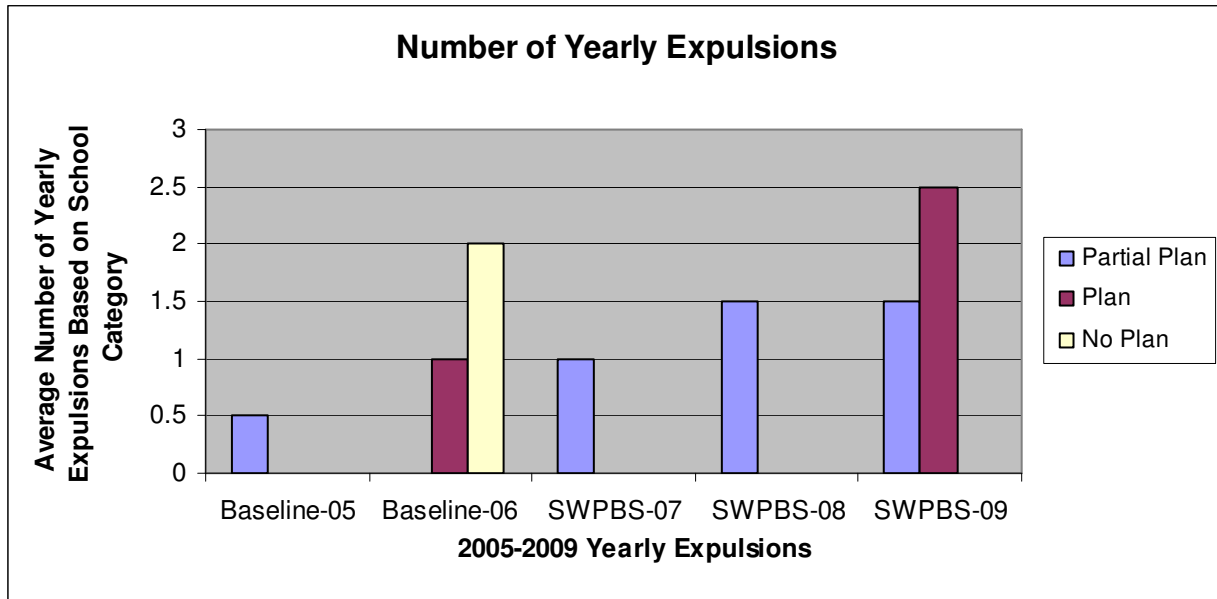


Figure 2. Number of Expulsions per School per Year

Research Question 3. During the 5 years under study is there a significant difference in suspensions among the three *SWPBS* categories of schools?

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the relationship between the *SWPBS* plan and the rate of suspensions per year. The independent variable, the *SWPBS* plan, included three categories: a plan in place, a partial plan, and no plan. The dependent variables are the average number of suspensions per year based on school category. None of the differences were significant. Respectively, $F(2,4)=.11, p=.901$, $F(2,4)=.20, p=.835$, $F(2,4)=.10, p=.913$, $F(2,4)=.14, p=.877$, and $F(2,4)=.30, p=.767$. Therefore, there were no

significant differences in suspensions among the three *SWPBS* categories of schools. Table 4 also shows $p > .05$ and therefore no follow-up tests were conducted.

Table 4

Means for Suspensions per School and Significance Between Plans for Suspensions

Year	Means	P
Suspensions Year 1	.11	.901
Suspensions Year 2	.20	.835
Suspensions Year 3	.10	.913
Suspensions Year 4	.14	.877
Suspensions Year 5	.30	.767

As shown in Figure 3, schools overall stayed consistent in the yearly number of suspensions given. The schools with a plan had more suspensions during the second year of *SWPBS* implementation, but those numbers decreased to baseline rate during the third year. Schools with no plan also increased during the 2008 school year but decreased by the next year.

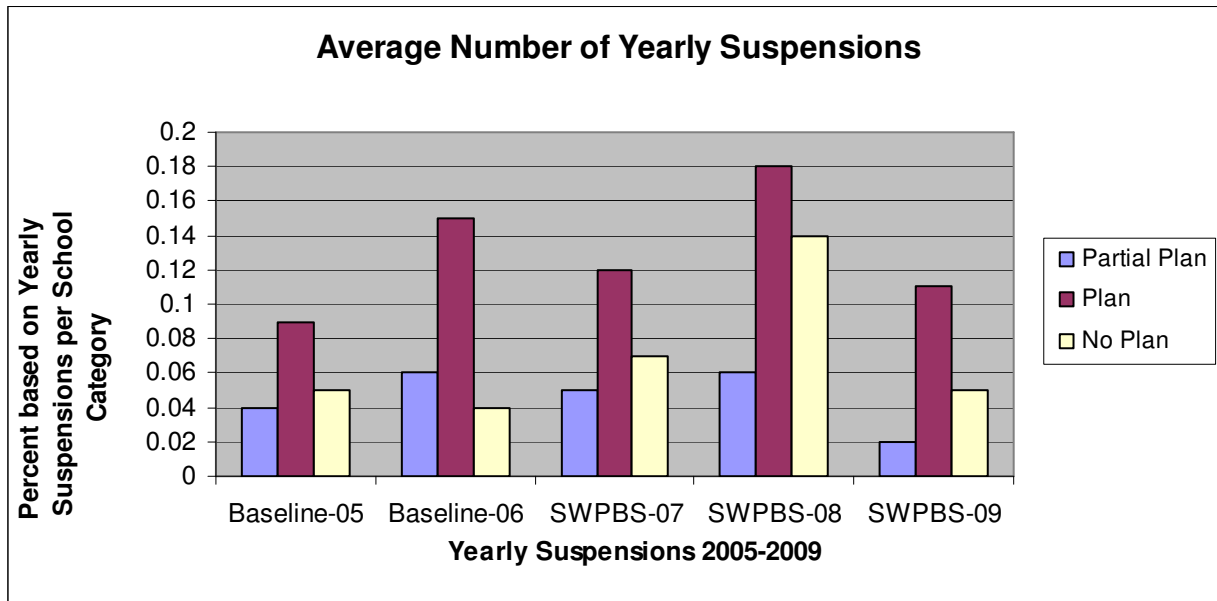


Figure 3. Number of Suspensions per School Category per Year

Research Question 4. Is there a significant difference for the current school year in teacher perceptions among the three *SWPBS* categories of schools?

A one-way chi-square analysis was conducted to determine if differences exist among teacher perceptions of the school among the three categories of schools. The independent variable was the *SWPBS* plan under the three categories: plan in place, partial in place, not in place. The dependent variable was the nominal value (less than 25 disagree and 26 or more agree) derived by the teacher survey. Results were not statistically significant, Pearson χ^2 (2, N=55) = 2.467, p = .291, and therefore follow-up tests were not conducted.

Research Question 5. Is there a significant difference for the current school year in student perceptions among the three *SWPBS* categories of schools?

A one-way chi-square analysis was conducted to determine if differences exist among student perceptions of the school among the three categories of schools. The independent variable was the *SWPBS* plan under the three categories: plan in place, partial in place, not in place. The dependent variable was the nominal value (less than 25 disagree and 26 or more agree) derived by the student survey. Plan and disagreement were found to be significantly related, Pearson χ^2 (2, N=812) =19.927, p <.001.

Follow-up pairwise comparisons were conducted to evaluate the difference among these proportions. Table 5 shows the results of these analyses.

Table 5

Results for the Pairwise Comparison

Comparison	Pearson chi-square	<i>p</i>
Partial Plan vs. Plan	14.79	<.001
Partial Plan vs. No Plan	12.46	<.001
Plan vs. No Plan	<.01	.950

The probability of a student having a negative attitude toward behavioral school policies was three times more likely when the student was at a school with the plan in place versus a student at a school with a partial plan. Students with no plan were also three times more likely to have negative feelings toward school behavior plan than those students at a school with a partial plan.

Chapter Summary

This chapter addressed the descriptive and inferential findings of the study. There were two schools considered to have a plan based on the 80% criteria, two schools with a partial plan, and one school with no plan. The 5-year study examined the overall effect on ODRs, suspensions, and expulsions under the three categories of schools as well as faculty and student perceptions (current year only) of *SWPBS*. The descriptive linear graph showed schools with a *SWPBS* plan in place had fewer ODRs from the Baseline Period through the *SWPBS* Period when compared to the other two categories. In terms of the overall effect on ODRs, suspensions, and expulsions the results of the ANOVAs were not statistically significant and no follow-up tests were conducted. In terms of teacher perceptions, the one-way chi-square analysis did not determine any significant differences and no follow-up tests were conducted. The one-way chi-square analysis administered for student perceptions showed significant differences and follow-up tests were conducted. The follow-up tests found that students in schools with either a plan or no plan were three times more likely to have a negative feelings toward school behavior plan than those students at a school with a partial plan.

Chapter 5 presents a summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for schools considering implementing *SWPBS* along with recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for further research in implementing *School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS)* along with recommendations for further research. The purpose of this study was to examine *SWPBS* programs in five middle school settings in a rural East Tennessee school district. The study focused on the process of using proactive behavior supports through *SWPBS* versus using other disciplinary measures. This study examines the overall effect on office disciplinary referrals (ODRs), suspensions, and expulsions under the three categories of schools as well as faculty and student perceptions (current year only) of *SWPBS*. Disciplinary data have been collected over a 5-year period with 2 years of baseline data before program was implemented, initial year of implementation, and 2 years after the implementation. The data include ODRs per 6 weeks, yearly suspensions and expulsions, School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET data), faculty surveys, and student surveys. While there can be an argument made against using ODRs for the measurement of behavior because the behaviors are not observed, they have been found to possess sufficient validity as a behavior measure and can be correlated with other indicators (Irvin et al., 2004). The methodology used in this study was quantitative and evaluative using some descriptive statistics.

One way to improve disciplinary problems is with the introduction of a behavioral intervention known as *SWPBS* (Cohen et al., 2007). This program is centered on teaching all students the basic foundations of respect and responsibility. Lesson plans include respect for self,

others, and property as well as being responsible with words, relationships, and work. There are currently 9,000 schools in the United States that have implemented *SWPBS* and more are signing up for the program every year (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, 2010). Many educators and administrators report that *SWPBS* is the way to effectively solve misconduct during the school day. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the *SWPBS* program in the middle school setting in a rural East Tennessee school district by using a quantitative evaluative study. The findings of this study are while the descriptive linear graph showed schools with a *SWPBS* plan in place had fewer ODRs from the Baseline Period through the *SWPBS* Period when compared to the other two categories, there were not significant differences in ODRs, suspensions, or expulsion rates.

For this study, teacher perceptions of schools also did not seem to be affected by the program. Student perceptions of schools tended to be more negative toward school behavioral policies in schools that either had a no plan or a plan.

Discussion and Conclusions

Quantitative Research Questions

Research Question 1. During the 5 years under study, is there a significant difference in ODRs among the three *SWPBS* categories of schools?

ODR data were collected for the 5 years under study. A score was derived for ODRs under each school category for a 6-week period by averaging the percentage ODRs for the two baseline periods and the 3 years for the *SWPBS* period. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the relationship between the *SWPBS* plan and the rate of ODRs per 6-weeks grading period. The descriptive linear graph showed schools with a *SWPBS*

plan in place had fewer ODRs from the Baseline Period through the *SWPBS* Period when compared to the other two categories. The analysis did not show any statistical significance between the three categories of schools.

The descriptive linear graph was reminiscent of the Bohan study (2006) in that a 3-year evaluative study was performed on a high school. ODR data obtained 2 years prior to implementation showed that the school had started decreasing the number of ODRs before the *SWPBS* plan. The number of ODRs actually rose for a time period during the implementation of *SWPBS*, although the disciplinary referrals did later decrease. One may make the suggestion that the *SWPBS* plan is not being implemented correctly or that there is a period of adjustment and teacher “buy-in” after the implementation. Dutton Tiller et al. (2010) did a survey on teacher perceptions and found that while teachers describe themselves as extremely influential to the lives of their students, they were more likely to use punitive disciplinary measures even though they had been trained in their schools positive behavior plan.

Research Question 2. During the 5 years under study is there a significant difference in expulsions among the three *SWPBS* categories of schools?

The expulsion rates were recorded as total numbers per school category for each yearly period. The numbers of actual expulsions were small with schools reporting between 0 and 5 per year. It was felt that the number of expulsions made the ability to effectively answer question #2 impossible; however, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the relationship between the *SWPBS* plan and the rate of expulsions per year. The analysis did not show significance.

Research Question 3. During the five years under study is there a significant difference in suspensions among the three *SWPBS* categories of schools?

The suspension rates were recorded as total numbers per school category for each yearly period. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the relationship between the *SWPBS* plan and the rate of suspensions per year. The analysis did not show significance or indicate that *SWPBS* was not effective in decreasing suspension rates; however, suspension is a consequence that is reserved for more severe infractions. Students who engage in more severe behaviors may respond better to secondary supports and may be nonresponsive to primary interventions used during the first year of *SWPBS*. It should also be noted that administration makes decisions regarding suspensions on a case by case basis and the change in administration (i.e. an administrator not fully trained in *SWPBS*) or an administrator not willing to use the *SWPBS* program could have affected the results of suspensions reported.

Research Question 4. Is there a significant difference for the current school year in teacher perceptions among the three *SWPBS* categories of schools?

Fifty-five staff and faculty voluntarily participated in a survey to measure teacher perceptions of the schools among the three *SWPBS* categories. A one-way chi-square analysis was conducted to determine if differences exist among teacher perceptions of the school among the three categories of schools. Results were found to be not statistically significant and therefore follow-up tests were not conducted.

A quantitative assessment may have been a better device receiving this type of school information. It may have been that the teachers who voluntarily participated were ones who most likely agreed with the way their school was operating or it may have suggested that teachers

were not aware if they had a fully implemented *SWPBS* plan or not. The ability to interview may have led to discussions and further findings in terms of faculty and staff perceptions.

Research Question 5. Is there a significant difference for the current school year in student perceptions among the three *SWPBS* categories of schools?

A one-way chi-square analysis was conducted to determine if differences exist among student perceptions of the school among the three categories of schools. Plan and disagreement were found to be significantly related and follow-up pairwise comparisons were conducted to evaluate the difference among these proportions. The probability of a student having a negative attitude toward the school behavioral plan was three times more likely when the student was at a school either with the plan or without a plan in place versus a student at a school with a partial plan.

The schools with a partial plan still used tangible rewards for good behavior, but they did not spend time on teaching good behavior or meeting as a team. If they did not meet and discuss students with behavior problems, the researcher may infer that the school most likely did not implement the tertiary supports for the most problematic students. Implementing tertiary supports may cause more negative feedback from students. As in the full plan school, not having a plan can cause feelings of an unsafe environment and would allow for some students to have a negative perception of their school. According to Masciarelli (1998) although middle school students do tend to view rules as something negative, the students have yet to understand discipline as a learning tool for self-management. They only see the rules associated with negative consequences for misbehavior. Tobin and Sprague (2000) noted the need for a highly

structured classroom with clear schedules, expectations, routines, and positive reinforcements for a middle school student.

As with question #4, this question may have been better answered through a quantitative method where the researcher would have had the ability to interview participants.

Implications for Practice

No direct implications for practice can be stated based on this restricted study. However, during this quantitative study five rural middle schools were examined. There are few longitudinal studies published concerning *SWPBS* and even fewer that compare a group of middle schools within a system. All schools had similarities and differences. The descriptive linear graph showed schools with a *SWPBS* plan in place had fewer ODRs from the Baseline Period through the *SWPBS* Period when compared to the other two categories, but each school under the three categories was relatively consistent in terms of ODRs, expulsions, and suspensions. Given the state and national mandates placed on school systems through *NCLB*, additional research needs to be conducted to clarify the overall effectiveness of the *SWPBS* program.

Recommendations for Further Research

A few areas have been highlighted for further research due to the findings of this study. There is a need to demonstrate the long-term effects, if any, of *SWPBS*. This could be accomplished by tracking specific students enrolled in school systems who have adopted an

SWPBS plan opposed to students without a consistent plan through their educational career.

Other longitudinal studies should be conducted to compare:

(1) Academic achievement of students exposed to *SWPBS* compared to students without an *SWPBS* plan.

(2) The effect an *SWPBS* plan has on students with certain types (emotional-behavioral disorders) and levels (moderate to severe) of disability who are at increased risk for challenging behaviors.

(3) The effect an *SWPBS* plan has on a certain behavior (i.e. bullying) in a school system over a period of time.

(4) The use of verbal reinforcers compared to the use of tangible reinforcers used when a student is caught doing something correctly.

(5) The evaluation on how the school is specifically implementing the plan.

(6) The evaluation of teacher and student perceptions of the *SWPBS* plan during and after implementation with more in-depth questions and observation tools with the possibility of follow-up questions and observations over a time period.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the findings that emerged from this multiple case study of the implementation of *SWPBS* in five middle schools in rural East Tennessee. The chapter included an overview that discussed the research methods and the theoretical frameworks employed to help make sense of the data. The findings revealed that the schools with a *SWPBS* plan in place did had ODRs from the baseline period through the *SWPBS* Period when compared to the other two categories; however, there were no statistically significant differences between the three

school categories (plan, partial plan, or no plan). There were also no statistically significant differences among school categories in terms of suspensions or expulsions, although there were too little data to for any relevancy in the assessment of expulsions. Teacher perceptions were generally the same regardless of school category. Student perceptions tended to be more negative if they were in a school with either a plan or no plan.

There were no direct implications for practice based on this restricted study. The chapter concluded with recommendations for future research.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Teacher Survey Instrument

Adapted from EBS v2.0 - Sugai, Horner & Todd (2000). EBS Self-Assessment Survey version 2.0 August 2003.

Person Completing the Survey:

Administrator Special Educator General Educator
 Counselor School Psychologist Educational/Teacher Assistant
 Other (Please specify _____)

1. Complete the survey independently. Your participation is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question or choose not to participate.
2. Schedule 20 minutes to complete the survey.
3. Base your rating on your individual experiences in the school. If you do not work in classrooms, answer questions that are applicable to you.

.Please read the statements carefully and mark how closely if you agree with each statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. School-wide behavioral expectations are clearly stated.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Structures are in place to use resources to assist students with chronic disciplinary behaviors.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Procedures are in place to address emergency situations.	1	2	3	4	5
4. A faculty team exists for behavior support planning.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Rewards exist for students meeting expected behaviors.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Problem behaviors are defined clearly.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Expected student behaviors are taught directly by faculty.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Distinctions between office v. classroom managed problem behaviors are clear.	1	2	3	4	5
9. School has formal strategies for informing families about expected student behaviors at school.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Data on problem behavior patterns are collected for on-going analysis by school.	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX B

Student Survey Instrument

School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (*SWPBS*) Student Perception Survey

The purpose of this survey is to rate the effectiveness of *SWPBS* used in your school. Your participation is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question.

Gender (check one): Male _____ Female _____

Grade (circle one): 7 8 Age: _____

Please read the statements carefully and mark how closely if you agree with each statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. My teachers do a good job teaching the school rules.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I feel safe in my classrooms.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I understand what will happen to me if I take part in a fight at school.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I enjoy earning points for good behavior.	1	2	3	4	5
5. My teachers do a good job rewarding students for good behavior.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I feel safe in the cafeteria.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Students feel comfortable telling a teacher about another student's misbehavior.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Students at this school treat each other with respect.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I feel safe in the bathrooms.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I am treated fairly about my behavior by the teachers at my school.	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX C

Letter to Director of Schools

August 30, 2010

Dear Mrs. Charlotte Britton:

My name is Michelle Harless, and I am a graduate student at East Tennessee State University. I am working on my dissertation and focusing on School-Wide Positive Behavior in rural East Tennessee. The name of my research study is entitled, *Disciplinary Referrals in Response to SWPBS in a Rural Middle School Setting*.

The purpose of my study is to focus on the climate of middle schools with positive behavior support. I would like to use the five middle schools' office disciplinary referral data for the last five years as part of this evaluative study. I would, also, like to give a brief survey questionnaire to faculty and staff who work at the middle schools within the district. The survey should take about 20 minutes to complete. They will be asked questions about the positive behavior support plans in place within the middle schools. A different questionnaire for students within the middle schools should take about 10 minutes to complete. They will be asked questions about school rules, rewards, and the feeling of safety within the school.

The method is completely anonymous and confidential. In other words, there will be no way to connect a participant's name with his or her responses. Although the participant's rights and privacy will be maintained, the ETSU IRB and Dr. Catherine Glascock will have access to the study records.

Participation in this research experiment is voluntary. They may refuse to participate. They can quit at any time. If they quit or refuse to participate, the benefits or treatment to that they are otherwise entitled will not be affected.

If you have any research-related questions or problems, you may contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Catherine Glascock. You may reach her at (423) 439-4430. Also, the chairperson of the Institutional Review Board at East Tennessee State University is available at (423) 439-6053 if you have questions about your rights as a research subject.

Sincerely,

Michelle Harless

(423) 357-0974

APPENDIX D

Letter from Director of Schools

Dear Ms. Harless,

Dr. Reba Bailey has contacted me to grant permission for Ms. Michelle Harless to conduct her research focusing on School-Wide Positive Behavior in rural East Tennessee. The name of the research is entitled, *Disciplinary Referrals in Response to School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan in a Rural Middle School Setting*.

I am granting permission for Ms. Michelle Harless to conduct her research in the Hawkins County School System provided that participation in this research is on a voluntary basis (both by faculty and students). Permission for students' participation in the study will be approved by the student's parent or guardian and results will be made available for analysis only under strict confidentiality controls.

At the completion of the study, I am requesting a copy of research results from Ms. Harless.

Good luck on the project. Thank you for your interest in the effect of the *SWPBS* on the students of Hawkins County.

Sincerely,

Charlotte M. Britton
Hawkins County Schools
200 North Depot Street
Rogersville, Tennessee 37857
423-272-7629 Ext.110
Fax 423-272-2207
Email: britton@hck12.net

APPENDIX E

Parent Letter

PARENT LETTER

Dear Parent or Guardian:

My name is Michelle Harless, and I am a graduate student at East Tennessee State University. I am working on my dissertation and focusing on School-Wide Positive Behavior in rural East Tennessee. The name of my research study is entitled, *Disciplinary Referrals in Response to School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan in a Rural Middle School Setting*.

The purpose of my study is to focus on the climate of middle schools with positive behavior support. Your child is being asked to take part in my survey to evaluate the effectiveness of School-Wide Positive Behavior. This is a very important survey that will help improve the school learning environment and combat problems such as poor academic performance and misbehavior. Please read this form for information about the survey, and instructions on how to withdraw your child. If you **do not** want your child to complete the survey, you must notify your school.

Survey Content. The survey gathers information on the student's feelings and attitudes about the current School-wide Positive Behavior Plan. It asks how closely they agree or disagree with remarks such as, "My teachers do a good job teaching the rules and expectations."

It is Voluntary. Your child does not have to take the survey. Students who participate only have to answer the questions they want to answer and they may stop taking it at any time. If your child decides not to participate or does not answer some questions on the survey, it will not affect your child's services in the schools nor will it impact the students grades.

It is Anonymous. No names will be recorded or attached to the survey forms or data. The results will be made available for analysis only under strict confidentiality controls with only the research study staff seeing the individual completed surveys. The school staff will not see the student survey data except in summary form with all students.

Administration. The survey will be administered on April 27, 2011. It will take about ten minutes and will be administered in your child's related arts class.

If you **do not** want your child to participate, please fill out and return the form below to your child's homeroom teacher by April 25, 2011.

SWPBS Survey Withdrawal Form

By returning this form, I **do not give permission** for my child to be in the SWPBS Survey.

(Please Print) My child's name is: _____ Grade: _____

Teacher's name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPROVED
By the ETSU IRB.

DOCUMENT VERSION EXPIRES

APR 22 2011

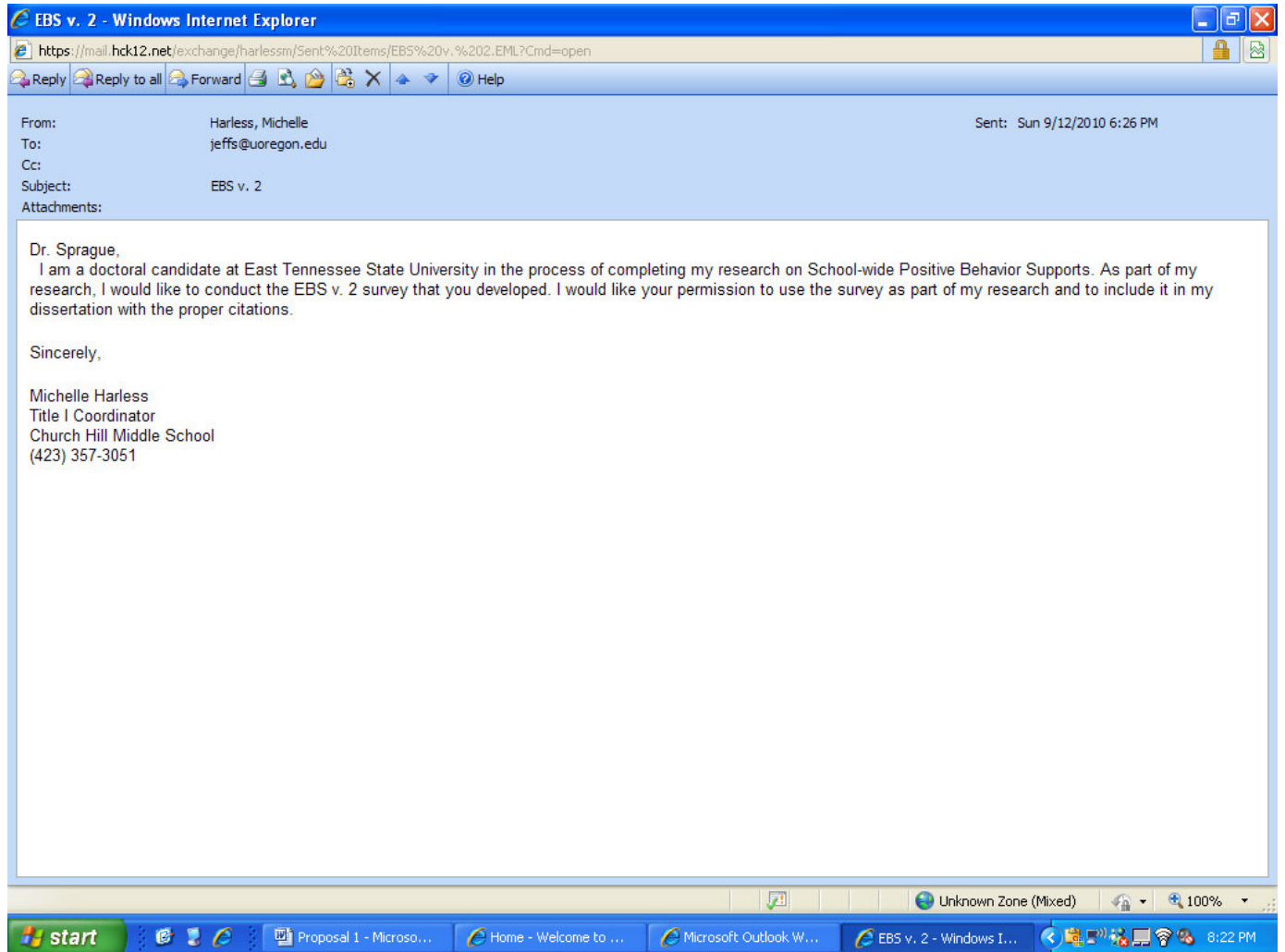
APR 21 2012

By _____
Chair/IRB Coordinator

ETSU IRB

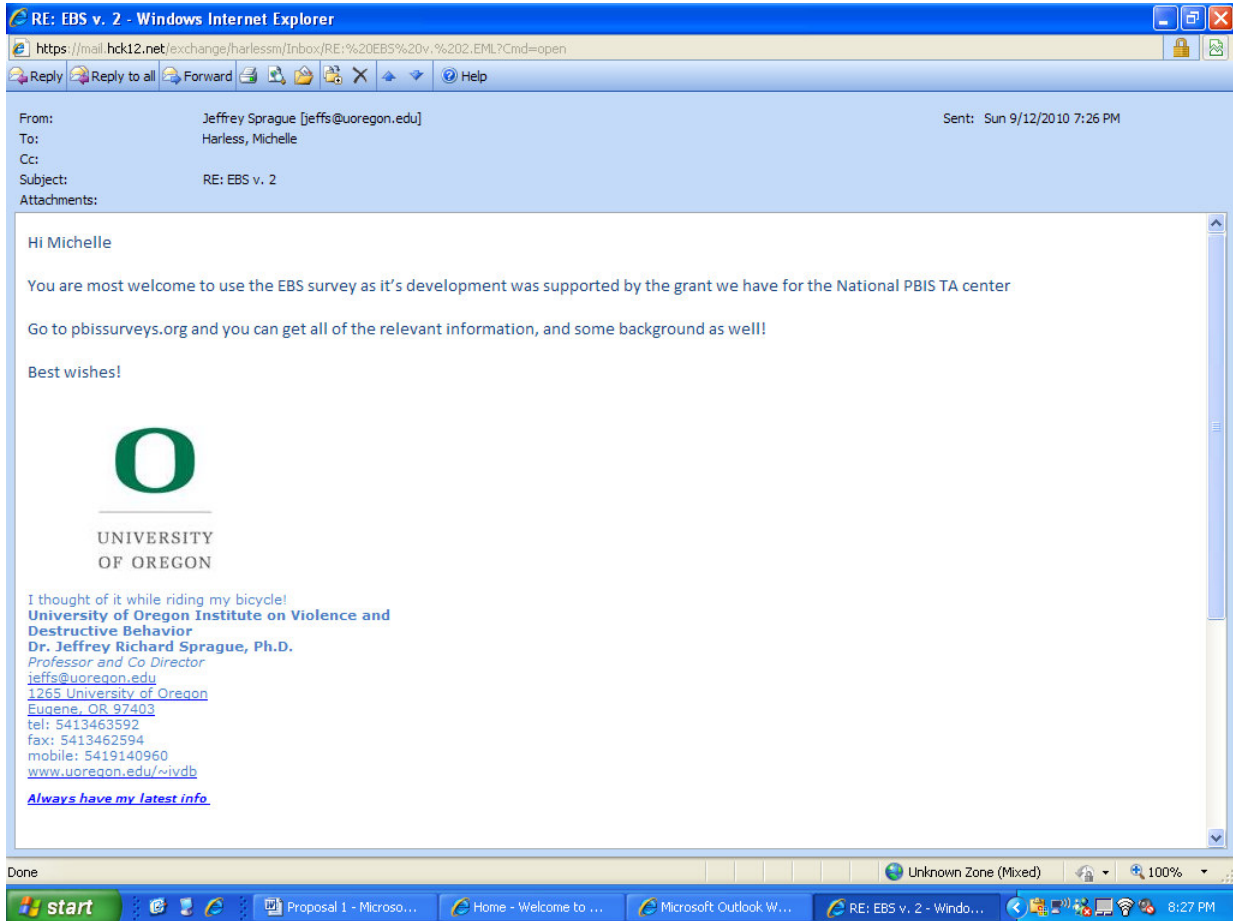
APPENDIX F

E-Mail for Permission to Use EBS Survey



APPENDIX G

E-Mail Response to Use EBS Survey



The screenshot shows a Windows Internet Explorer browser window displaying an email. The browser's address bar shows the URL: <https://mail.hck12.net/exchange/harlessm/Inbox/RE:%20EBS%20v.%202.EML?Cmd=open>. The email header includes:

From: Jeffrey Sprague [jeffs@uoregon.edu]
To: Harless, Michelle
Cc:
Subject: RE: EBS v. 2
Attachments:
Sent: Sun 9/12/2010 7:26 PM


The email body contains the following text:

Hi Michelle

You are most welcome to use the EBS survey as it's development was supported by the grant we have for the National PBIS TA center

Go to pbissurveys.org and you can get all of the relevant information, and some background as well!

Best wishes!


UNIVERSITY
OF OREGON

I thought of it while riding my bicycle!
University of Oregon Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior
Dr. Jeffrey Richard Sprague, Ph.D.
Professor and Co Director
jeffs@uoregon.edu
[1265 University of Oregon Eugene, OR 97403](http://1265.UniversityofOregon.Eugene.OR.97403)
tel: 5413463592
fax: 5413462594
mobile: 5419140960
www.uoregon.edu/~ivdb
[Always have my latest info.](#)

The bottom of the screenshot shows the Windows taskbar with the Start button, several open applications (Proposal 1 - Microso..., Home - Welcome to..., Microsoft Outlook W..., RE: EBS v. 2 - Windo...), and the system tray showing the time as 8:27 PM.

APPENDIX H

IRB Approval



East Tennessee State University
Office for the Protection of Human Research Subjects • Box 70565 • Johnson City, Tennessee 37614-1707
Phone: (423) 439-6053 Fax: (423) 439-6060

IRB APPROVAL – Initial Expedited Review

April 26, 2011

Ms. Michelle Harless
208 Hammond Ave
Mount Carmel, TN 37645

Re: Disciplinary Referrals in Response to SWPBS in a Rural Middle School Setting
IRB#: c0211.21s

The following items were reviewed and approved by an expedited process:

- Form 103; Narrative (01/26/11 stamped approved 04/22/11)*; Potential Conflict of Interest (none identified); CV; Assurance Statement; Supplemental Submission Form for Studies with Children Participants; Effective Behavior Support Survey; SWPBS Student Perception Survey; Permission from Hawkins County Schools; Parent Letter (no ver. date stamped approved 04/22/11)*; Faculty and Staff Consent Form (ver. 02/24/11 stamped approved 04/22/11)*; Student Assent form (ver. 02/24/11 stamped approved 04/22/11)*

The item(s) with an asterisk(*) above noted changes requested by the expedited reviewers.

The following documents with the incorporated requested changes have been received by the IRB office:

- Narrative (01/26/11 stamped approved 04/22/11)
- Parent Letter (no version date stamped approved 04/22/11)
- Student Assent (Ver. 02/24/11 stamped approved 04/22/11)
- Faculty and Staff Consent (ver. 02/24/11 stamped approved 04/22/11)

On April 22, 2011, a final approval was granted for a period not to exceed 12 months and will expire on April 21, 2012. The expedited approval of the study *and* requested changes [Narrative (01/26/11 stamped approved 04/22/11); Parent Letter (no version date stamped approved 04/22/11); Student Assent (Ver. 02/24/11 stamped approved 04/22/11); Faculty and Staff Consent (ver. 02/24/11 stamped approved 04/22/11)] will be reported to the convened board on the next agenda.



Accredited Since December 2005

The Faculty and Staff Consent has been granted a Waiver of Requirement for Written Documentation of Informed Consent under category 45 CFR 46.117(c)(2) as the research involves no more than minimal risk to the participants because it is an anonymous survey asking benign questions. The research involved no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context because it is an anonymous survey of adults and children with the use of assent and passive parental consent, the study is minimal risk and asking benign questions.

The Parental Permission has been granted a Waiver or Alteration of Informed Consent by Chris Ayres, Chair, ETSU IRB under category 45 CFR 46.118(d)(1-4). Those determinations are as follows: (1) research involves no more than minimal risk to the participants because it is an anonymous survey of benign questions; (2) the waiver or alteration will not adversely affect the rights and welfare of the subjects because parental consent will be sought; (3) the research could not practicably be carried out without the waiver or alteration because the study involves children and parental consent; and (4) providing participants additional pertinent information after participation is not appropriate because the participants are children.

Based on the review of the Children's Advocate, the IRB determined that no greater than minimal risk to children is presented because it involves a survey that is confidential and private. The IRB determined that the requirement for parental permission is waived, based on the determinations above. The IRB determined that assent is required for each child who is capable of providing assent based on age, maturity, and psychological state. Documentation of assent is not required.

The following enclosed stamped, approved Informed Consent Documents have been stamped with the approval and expiration date and these documents must be copied and provided to each participant prior to participant enrollment:

- Parent Letter (no version date stamped approved 04/22/11)
- Student Assent (Ver. 02/24/11 stamped approved 04/22/11)
- Faculty and Staff Consent (ver. 02/24/11 stamped approved 04/22/11)

Federal regulations require that a copy is given to the subject(s) at the time of consent.

Unanticipated Problems Involving Risks to Subjects or Others must be reported to the IRB (and VA R&D if applicable) within 10 working days.

Proposed changes in approved research cannot be initiated without IRB review and approval. The only exception to this rule is that a change can be made prior to IRB approval when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the research subjects [21 CFR 56.108 (a)(4)]. In such a case, the IRB must be promptly informed of the change following its implementation (within 10 working days) on Form 109 (www.etsu.edu/irb). The IRB will review the change to determine that it is consistent with ensuring the subject's continued welfare.

Sincerely,
Chris Ayres, Chair
ETSU Campus IRB

cc: Catherine Glascock, PhD

APPENDIX I

Faculty and Staff Consent Form

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Michelle Harless

TITLE OF PROJECT: Disciplinary Referrals in Response to SWPBS in a Rural Middle School Setting

Faculty and Staff Consent Form

PURPOSE: The purpose of this research study is to evaluate the effectiveness of School-Wide Positive Behavior. This survey that you are being asked to take part in will ask questions about the school learning environment, academic performance, and misbehavior.

DURATION Ninety-five faculty and staff across the county are being asked to take part in the study. The survey will take about ten minutes to complete if you decide to complete the survey.

PROCEDURES The survey will be administered on April 27, 2011. You will receive the survey in your teacher mailbox and will have three days to privately complete the survey. The survey should be returned to the office in the provided envelope by Friday, April 29th.

POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this survey.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS Your participation may help benefit the school by providing data that can help improve the learning environment.

FINANCIAL COSTS There are no financial costs for participating in this study.

COMPENSATION IN THE FORM OF PAYMENTS TO RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
There is no compensation/payment for being a research participant.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION You do not have to take the survey. Faculty and staff who participate only have to answer the questions they want to answer and they may stop taking the survey at any time. There will be no penalty for not participating. If you chose not to participate or not to answer certain questions, it will not affect your evaluations or services received from the school.

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS If you have any questions, problems or research-related problems at any time, you may call Michelle Harless at 423/357-0974 or Dr. Catherine Glascock at 423/439-4430. You may call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board at 423/439-6054 for any questions you may have about your rights as a research subject. If you have any questions or concerns about the research and want to talk to someone independent of the research team or you can't reach the study staff, you may call an IRB Coordinator at 423/439-6055 or 423/439/6002.

CONFIDENTIALITY Every attempt will be made to see that your study results are kept confidential. The school staff and administration will not see individual survey data

Ver. 02/24/11

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APR 22 2011

By _____
Chair/IRB Coordinator

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ETSU IRB

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Michelle Harless

TITLE OF PROJECT: Disciplinary Referrals in Response to SWPBS in a Rural Middle School Setting

except in a summary form. Only the research study staff will see the individual completed surveys. A copy of the records from this study will be stored in with Michelle Harless for at least 5 years after the end of this research. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming you as a subject. Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, ETSU IRB, and the ETSU Department of Education have access to the study records.

You have been given the chance to ask questions and to discuss your participation with the investigator. You freely and voluntarily choose to be in this research project. Once you complete the survey, please keep this consent for your records.

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APR 22 2011

By 
Chair/IRB Coordinator

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APR 21 2012

ETSU IRB

APPENDIX J

Student Assent Form

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Michelle Harless

TITLE OF PROJECT: Disciplinary Referrals in Response to SWPBS in a Rural Middle School Setting

Student Assent Form

PURPOSE: The purpose of this research study is to evaluate the effectiveness of School-Wide Positive Behavior. This survey that you are being asked to take part in will ask questions about the school learning environment, academic performance, and misbehavior.

DURATION There are 1395 students across the county that are being asked to take part in the study. The survey will take about ten minutes to complete if you decide to complete the survey.

PROCEDURES The survey will be administered on April 27, 2011. It will be administered in your related arts class.

POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this survey.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS Your participation may help benefit the school by providing data that can help improve the learning environment.

FINANCIAL COSTS There are no financial costs for participating in this study.

COMPENSATION IN THE FORM OF PAYMENTS TO RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
There is no compensation/payment for being a research participant.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION You do not have to take the survey. Students who participate only have to answer the questions they want to answer and they may stop taking the survey at any time. There will be no penalty for not participating. If you chose not to participate or not to answer certain questions, it will not affect your grade or the type of services you receive from the school.

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS If you have any questions, problems or research-related problems at any time, you may call Michelle Harless at 423/357-0974 or Dr. Catherine Glascock at 423/439-4430. You may call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board at 423/439-6054 for any questions you may have about your rights as a research subject. If you have any questions or concerns about the research and want to talk to someone independent of the research team or you can't reach the study staff, you may call an IRB Coordinator at 423/439-6055 or 423/439/6002.

CONFIDENTIALITY Every attempt will be made to see that your study results are kept confidential. The school staff will not see individual student survey data except in a summary form with all students. Only the research study staff will see the individual completed surveys. A copy of the records from this study will be stored in with Michelle

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PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Michelle Harless

TITLE OF PROJECT: Disciplinary Referrals in Response to SWPBS in a Rural Middle School Setting

Harless for at least 5 years after the end of this research. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming you as a subject. Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, ETSU IRB, and the ETSU Department of Education have access to the study records.

You have been given the chance to ask questions and to discuss your participation with the investigator. You freely and voluntarily choose to be in this research project. Once you complete the survey, please keep this consent for your records.

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VITA

MICHELLE ROGERS HARLESS

Personal Data:

Date of Birth: May 19, 1973
Place of Birth: Kingsport, TN
Marital Status: Married

Education:

B. S. Mass Communication East Tennessee State University, Johnson
City, Tennessee 1994

M. A. Teaching, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City,
Tennessee 2004

Ed. D. Educational Leadership, East Tennessee State University,
Johnson City, Tennessee 2011

Professional
Experience:

Teacher/Title 1 Coordinator, Church Hill Middle School, Hawkins
County, Tennessee 2005-Current

Honors and
Awards:

Church Hill Middle School Teacher of the Year 2007

Target Field Trip Grant Recipient 2008