SUSTAINING POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT (PBIS)

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By

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ABSTRACT

SUSTAINING POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT (PBIS)

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Across the nation schools are adopting Positive Behavior Interventions and Support as a school management plan. Despite the vast research on PBIS implementation and the effects of the program on student behavior, little is known about the sustainability of the model. This qualitative single case study examined stakeholder values, beliefs, and feelings in relation to PBIS in a western North Carolina middle school in which School-wide Evaluation Tool evaluations over six years point to a successfully sustained program. Under a framework of symbolic interactionism, in which the dynamics of interpersonal relationships, leadership, communication, and the local environment are acknowledged as factors on perceptions and attitudes, data was collected in the form of personal interviews, observations, and artifacts. Findings show important contributing factors to the sustainability of PBIS at the sample school include teacher buy-in, program effectiveness, communication, commitment and collaboration, teacher leadership, and teacher voice. The PBIS program suffered in its implementation due to teacher perceptions of the initiative as top heavy and administratively forced. Sustainability was made possible when teacher voice was heard and teacher leadership emerged. Implications of this research extend beyond the PBIS program to any initiative introduced into schools. Teacher buy-in is key to program sustainability.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The focus of this dissertation is on the sustainability of Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) in a case study middle school. This focus has emerged from the positive outcomes produced through the implementation of PBIS in the middle school where I currently work, as well as the middle school where I previously worked. I have witnessed first hand the positive changes in school culture and in student behavior due to the implementation of PBIS. I am interested in examining the beliefs, values, and meanings that contribute to the sustainability of PBIS in schools.

Perhaps the most thorough definition of PBIS is presented by Warren, Bohanon-Edmonson, Turnbull, Sailor, Wickham, Griggs, and Beech (2006) who stated that PBIS is a:

> prevention minded approach to student discipline that is characterized by its focus on defining and teaching behavior expectations, rewarding appropriate behaviors, continual evaluation of its effectiveness, and the integration of supports for individuals, groups, the school as a whole, and school/family/community partnerships. (p.188)

Several researchers including Sherrod, Getch, and Ziomek-Daigle (2009) and Medley, Little, and Akin-Little (2008) described PBIS as a proactive strategy designed to address problem behaviors in many school settings and suggested the program as a positive alternative to the punitive approach. In response to the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 2004, a national center on PBIS was created where experts from the University of Oregon researched and evaluated behavior intervention that would help students with behavior disabilities. They found that PBIS and evidence-based

interventions were not only beneficial to students with behavior disabilities, but also to whole school populations (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012).

Key components of PBIS, as described by Turnbull, Edmondson, Griggs, Wickham, Sailor, and Beech (2002), include a proactive approach to behavior management, data-based decision making, and a dedicated team of stakeholders invested in a problem-solving model. In general, as expressed by Lewis, Powers, Kelk, and Newcomer (2002), PBIS develops a school-wide system with clear expectations in the classroom and in common areas such as cafeteria, hallway, bus parking lot, playground, etc. Interventions, supports, and positive reinforcement are provided in all areas and range in detail based on the school's and each child's specific need(s). PBIS includes three levels of support: primary or universal, secondary or targeted, and tertiary or individualized (Farkas, Simonsen, Migdole, Donovan, Clemens, and Cicchese, 2012). These levels of support are described in detail in chapter two.

My first experience with PBIS was during the 2009-2010 school year. I was an assistant principal in a large middle school with challenging demographics. Problem student behaviors, low test scores, and large amounts of office disciplinary referrals (ODR) presented major challenges. Several studies, as detailed in the following paragraph, concluded that PBIS has a positive effect on student behavior in schools.

According to Metzler, Biglan, and Rusby (2001), a middle school in Oregon reported an increase in appropriate behavior and also a decrease in ODRs after PBIS implementation. Similarly, Lewis et al. (2002) reported a decrease of problem behavior in a Missouri elementary school after PBIS implementation. Additionally, Warren et al. (2006) detailed a decrease in challenging behavior in an urban middle school with a

history of bad behavior and attributed the results to PBIS. Lassen, Steele, and Sailor (2006) concluded that PBIS reduces office disciplinary referrals and long-term suspensions, resulting in more class time for students. And, Putnam, Horner, and Algozzine (2010) added that this increased academic time leads to improved scores on standardized tests.

The district Director of Student Services mandated the implementation of PBIS at my middle school. PBIS was a state initiative and all schools were required to be active PBIS schools by the 2013-2014 school year. Due to our high rate of suspensions, we were selected to be the pilot middle school for PBIS in the district. No one likes to receive a directive without being able to give input and our administrative team was no different; we were less than pleased. With our limited knowledge of PBIS, we were convinced that it was a program for elementary schools and could not be effective with our middle grade students. I decided to research the program so that when (and if) our school resisted implementation, we would be able to effectively support our reluctance.

Early that summer, I completed a review of the literature on the implementation and effectiveness of PBIS in schools throughout the nation. I discovered an overwhelming body of evidence demonstrating the success of the program in schools across all levels of education. Though many of these schools were elementary, some of the interventions cited could certainly be modified for a middle school environment. PBIS has spread rapidly since developing roots in the educational scene in 1998. Nirvi Shah (2012) reported that around 18,300 schools nationwide are now implementing PBIS as a behavior management program. This should not come as a surprise when one considers that Horner, Freeman, Nelson, and Sugai (2010) reported a 20%-60% decrease

in ODR's, an increase in student satisfaction, an increase in staff satisfaction, and an enhanced feeling of safety by school administrators in those schools appropriately implementing the program. I began to see PBIS as a possible solution for behavior management in my school. However, schools function most effectively when everyone works together as a team and I needed support, input, and collaboration from the entire staff.

The remainder of the summer was spent preparing for PBIS implementation. An optional staff meeting was held to gather staff input. We shared referral data with teachers from the previous year in order to show the need for an improved approach to discipline. The administrative team then shared an overview of PBIS - the goals and aims of the program, the positive results, and preliminary ideas about how to implement the program both at the whole school and classroom level. At the time, there was extremely limited research in the area of middle schools and PBIS so that is the area where we asked for staff input regarding our school's management needs and most pressing problems.

Our first step was to create a PBIS leadership team. Staff members nominated and voted on those who would represent their interests on the PBIS team. Then, each staff member who was present wrote down on note cards the ideas they had for implementing the program both school-wide and within their classrooms. Staff members were also given a list of the most frequent misbehaviors and asked to label them as minor or major discipline behaviors so as to determine which behaviors could be handled inside the classroom and which needed administrative intervention. The PBIS team met several times throughout the remainder of the summer to discuss the details of implementation

and create a plan. The following school year, PBIS was implemented at our school. Not only did it work, it exceeded all expectations in reducing behavioral problems.

Today I am the principal of a different middle school within the same county and our school is in its first year of PBIS implementation. We spent our summer doing many of the same things that my previous school did a couple of years ago. We learned about PBIS, discussed our need for the program, developed a PBIS team, and created a plan for implementation. Last year, our school led the district in the number of days students spent in In-School-Suspension (ISS) and also had the highest percentage in the district of the student population referred to the office for discipline. Although we are early in the stages of PBIS implementation, we are already seeing positive results in terms of reduction in problem behaviors and ISS numbers. It is important that we are able to sustain these results as time on task for learning with minimal disruptions is a priority.

The Case for Positive Behavior Intervention and Support

The management of students both in classrooms and throughout the school presents an important challenge to teachers and administrators. Nationwide, schools are looking for ways to reduce suspensions and improve the learning environment. Issues with classroom management affect many aspects of school life. Bogen (2009) noted student discipline as the most popular reason for teachers leaving their jobs. Managing student behavior is a major obstacle for teachers to overcome in order for students to learn. Not only does inappropriate behavior inhibit the learning of the child who exhibits the behavior, Warren et al. (2006) found that it impedes the learning of others as well. Scott, Park, Swain-Bradley, & Landers (2007) discovered that the most common type of student referral is one related to avoidance of class related activities. While these

behaviors are not violent and may include off-task speaking without permission, getting out of one's seat, passing notes, or just minor disruptions, teachers report that they take up substantial instructional time (Walker & Sprague, 2000).

Nationwide, schools are confronting similar challenges in the area of student behavior management. Warren et al. (2006) reported many students come to school dealing with issues relating to poor family lives, mental illness, substance abuse, and other contributing non-school factors that make it difficult to maintain focus on academics. Marchant et al. (2009), supported this statement in his study and concluded that more and more children are beginning kindergarten unprepared to learn and unable to cope with the demands of schooling. Yet, legislation associated with No Child Left Behind includes the expectation that all students, regardless of background or disability, must be proficient in Math and Language Arts by 2014 (National Science Foundation , 2008).

Teachers are trying to educate in an environment that is often unfavorable for or detrimental to learning. In a study cited by Public Agenda (2010), half of Americans say that one of the most serious issues facing public schools is not a lack of funding, but rather a lack of student discipline. Given this information, it is not surprising that Warren et al. (2006) stated that over 76% of teachers believe they would be more effective in the classroom if student discipline were not such a huge issue. Fitzsimmone (1998) concluded that schools are in need of a framework for supporting and reinforcing positive behavior.

As explained by Lassen et al. (2006), punitive discipline approaches that are typically used in classrooms and schools across the nation rely on tools such as referrals

and suspensions as the major components of behavior management plans. However, a study by Putnam et al. (2010) determined that an estimated twenty minutes of instructional time is lost for every referral written. Results of referrals are often in-school or out-of-school suspensions. These suspensions lead to time out of class. Less time in the classroom means fewer opportunities to access curriculum and ultimately leads to lower grades and test scores for the offending students.

Furthermore, research by Lassen et al. (2006) suggested that punitive strategies might actually have an adverse effect on behavior, particularly for students most in need of interventions and behavior management. Newcomer and Lewis (2010) found that zero-tolerance policies and "get-tough" approaches have not proven successful in reducing incidents of violence, classroom disruption, and overall student misbehavior. It is clear that student management policies that rely on punitive approaches like suspension are not effective in reducing problem behaviors and hurt students' academic performance.

Teachers are ultimately responsible for the learning of their students, and it is well known that classroom disruptions negatively impact student success. It is the responsibility of the teacher to minimize disruptions and have effective classroom management. Marzano, Marzano, and Pickering (2003) suggested that effective teachers can prevent discipline problems in the classroom by engaging students and using materials and activities that keep student interest. Similarly, McGarity and Butts (2006) indicated that effective classroom management practices can assist in reducing disruptive behavior.

Though support for PBIS is growing rapidly, the program has limitations. Chitiyo and Wheeler (2009) reported problems that include insufficient time to implement the

program properly and ineffective use of data. Likewise, Metzler et al. (2001) found that a lack of support and training for teachers, overly complex behavioral management strategies, and weak administration can limit the effectiveness of the program.

Problem Statement

Perhaps the most significant limitation of the PBIS program is the lack of research on sustainability. Han and Weiss (2005) defined sustainability as a durable and long term program implementation at a level of fidelity that continues to produce valued and intended outcomes. To date, only a few papers have been published on PBIS sustainability. Details of this research are included in the literature review. Sugai and Horner (2006); Coffey and Horner (2012); McIntosh, Mercer, Hume, Frank, Turri, and Mathews (2012); and Sparks (2007) reported that the keys to PBIS sustainability are strong administrative support, a PBIS leadership team, professional development, and data-driven decision making. Without these factors, staff buy-in falters as they fail to see the continued worth of the program. Sustainability is possible but by no means guaranteed. It is my fear that like many other programs in education, PBIS will eventually disappear from the minds of educators and we will return to the ineffective punitive approaches used to discipline students.

In summary, behavior management and school safety have become clear priorities in our nation's schools. Evidence shows PBIS provides an effective whole school management structure. Many schools, districts, and states have successfully implemented the program. Sustaining this successful program should be a priority, yet little research in the area of PBIS sustainability can be found. This study intends to fill a gap in research by employing a qualitative, single case approach to explore PBIS

sustainability through the lens of symbolic interactionism and the human interactions that take place within a school.

Conceptual Framework

To properly frame this study it is necessary to examine symbolic interactionism and its implications for the meanings behind relationships and programs social in nature. Athens (2009) noted that symbolic interactionism is based on the work of social psychologist George Herbert Mead (1863-1931). Through the lens of symbolic interactionism, reality is viewed as a social construct that forms primarily through a series of interactions. Herbert Blumer, a student of Mead's, stated that symbolic interactionism suggests "the meanings of a thing for a person to grow out of the ways in which other persons act toward the person with regard to the thing" (1969, p.4).

Blumer (1969) also gave three premises to describe the foundation of social interactionism. Burbank and Martins (2009) summarized these tenants by explaining that: first, people are thinking beings constantly applying meaning to experience. Second, and perhaps the most defining feature of symbolic interactionism, states that meanings are developed through social interactions. This includes macro-level influences such as resource availability, political climate, and other external environmental factors. Third, these meanings are highly personalized and inform each individual's way of processing new people, situations, and encounters. Blumer's (1969) description of this premise reveals that interpretation is not an automatic application of established meaning, yet a formative iterative process that is continuously being used and revised. Additionally, according to Tower, Rowe, and Wallis (2012), the framework for symbolic interactionism allows the researcher to put people at the center of the research

process. They go on to explain "interactionism has methodological utility because it can contribute to policy and practice development by drawing on the perspectives and experiences of those who are central to the research process" (p. 41).

Charon (2007) contributed to this idea by emphasizing the perspectives of human beings and how each person's perspective becomes his or her reality. Research informed by symbolic interactionism is focused on stakeholders and the ways in which they perceive and process experience and change through communication and social encounter with one another and the local environment.

The themes of social interactionism translate easily into the existing PBIS sustainability research. According to Visagie, Linde, and Havenga (2011), symbolic interaction leadership capacities depends on the ability to "develop, coach, mentor, team-build, manage change, and establish organizational culture" (p. 232). Symbolic Interactionism theorists maintain that people draw on their communications and experiences with others in order to create their own reality and perspective. This holds true in leaders' relationships with followers as well as in followers' relationships with leaders.

Communication skills and positive relationships are imperative to strong, sustainable school leadership (Fallan, 2003; Becker and Smith, 2011). As Visage et al. (2011) further detailed, "An interactive leadership approach relies on communication skills. In interaction with leaders, individuals rely on meaningful, reflexive interaction and thus on personally significant and emotional connections through communication" (p. 231). The importance of leaders who value relationships cannot be ignored, especially in relation to affecting and sustaining change. Also, placing emphasis on

communication and personal interactions, Blumer (1969) stated that "symbolic interactionism sees group life as a process in which people, as they meet in their different situations, indicate lines of action to each other and interpret the indications made by others" (p. 52). Within this framework, a school environment composed of individuals consistently interacting with others and an ever-changing social and professional dynamic demands both administrative and organic leaders who are open to diverse opinions, show a capacity for self-reflection and introspection, communicate effectively, and easily adapt to changing situations and circumstances (Visagie et al., 2011). Sustainability requires more than just strong administrative leadership. It also requires a power structure that encourages people to work together in decision-making and be able to openly communicate to develop shared expectations (Boonstra & Gravenhorst, 1998). A program's value to whole school vision and goals must be acknowledged across all stakeholders, and upheld by both those in formal leadership positions as well as those in informal positions (Becker and Smith, 2011).

The limited studies published on PBIS sustainability point the responsibilities of school leadership at the teacher, administrative, and district level. In a study about teachers' perspectives of effective principals, Blase and Blase (1999) found that principals who communicated with teachers, encouraged reflection, and supported teacher leaders were able to maintain teaching staffs which were more highly motivated, more satisfied with their profession, and had a higher sense of self-efficacy. Furthermore, McIntosh et al. (2012) found that two factors contribute significantly to sustained implementation—team use of data at the school level and capacity building at both the school and district levels. On the other hand, Coffey and Horner (2012)

identified factors that contribute to sustainability in schools such as staff buy-in, shared vision, administrative support, strong leadership at various levels, ongoing technical assistance, data-based decision making, and continuous staff development. In addition, Sugai and Horner (2006) recommend the use of a strong leadership team in order to give PBIS its best chance at being successfully sustained in schools and districts. The team requires support from district and school officials in terms of funding, visibility of the PBIS program, and political support. In *Implementation and Sustainability of Positive Behavior Systems in Elementary Schools*, Sparks (2007) noted that a strong PBIS team is crucial to sustaining a PBIS program, as it can serve as a "site based steering mechanism" (p. 14) for the process.

While each study presents a different model, the four most common factors are the presence of a PBIS leadership team composed of administrators and teacher leaders, strong administrative support, quality professional development, and the use of data to guide decisions. See Table 1 below:

Table 1

Common Factors in Sustaining PBIS

FACTORS	Leadership team	Administrative support	Professional Development	Use of Data
Sugai & Horner (2006)	X	X	X	
Mcintosh et al (2012)	X	X		X
Coffey & Horner (2012)		X		X
Sparks (2007)	X	X	X	

Schools function as people-based organizations and symbolic interactionism provides a foundation for close examination of the ways in which individuals interact with one another as well as the macro-political factors which exist uniquely in every school environment and the meanings attached to the various parts of the work they do together. According to Tower et al. (2012):

> Characteristics common to symbolic interactionism research are the belief that people act towards things (symbols) based on the meanings that they have for them, that meanings of symbols are derived from and arise out of social interactions, and that meanings are modified through an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with encounter. (p. 41)

This research explores the changing perspectives and evolving values, meanings, and beliefs of stakeholders including administrators, teachers, and parents, and how these unique perspectives contribute to perceptions of sustainability of the PBIS model in one middle school. The link between PBIS sustainability and symbolic interactionism lies in the emphasis on communication and dialogue among school stakeholders, and the meanings attached to the progress and processes of PBIS implementation. PBIS is only sustainable if a system of communication and decision-making allows key stakeholders to regularly asses and re-evaluate the program and make changes according to needs. In this way, the system remains meaningful, relevant, and responsive to change.

Symbolic Interactionism theorists maintain that systems, programs and organizations change and develop through communications and relationships. Factors such as internal political struggle, economics, and resource availability also play a significant role in how perceptions of program sustainability will evolve and change.

Boonstra and Gravenhorst (1998, p.99) defined power as a "dynamic social process affecting opinions, emotions, and behavior of interest groups in which inequalities are involved with respect to the realization of wishes and interests."

Burbank and Martins (2009) argued that all human experience is filtered through the lens of our interactions with others. PBIS sustainability models point to examples of school leaders interacting with stakeholders, the power dynamics involved in the composition of school-based PBIS leadership teams, the power dynamic inherent to the relationship between leadership teams and staff, and the ways in which staff process and adapt to staff development. In short, using symbolic interactionism as a framework, we can approach PBIS sustainability as dependent on people and their perceptions of the worth and effectiveness of the program, which is greatly influenced by informal and formal communications and interactions within the school regarding the program and on the system remaining dynamic and responsive to changing meanings and needs as determined by communicative stakeholders.

Program sustainability is a process. According to Patterson and Martin (2012), a qualitative approach to research acknowledges that people experience day-to-day reality from unique perspectives and therefore any meaningful examination of a social process should incorporate unique and changing perspectives. Symbolic interactionism emphasizes interactions between people and among individuals and the macro-level influences of their surroundings. Patterson and Martin maintain that "Individuals interpret and respond to the social realities developed through interaction with others" (p. 34). Symbolic interactionism serves as an overarching framework for analysis of PBIS sustainability by guiding the research process in the direction of stakeholder focus and an

emphasis on social interaction. As stakeholders communicate and interact, meanings, values, and beliefs are formed.

Program sustainability in a school depends heavily on buy-in, the belief that the program is effective and worthwhile. Leaders should be mindful of the role that power dynamics, both formal and informal, play in the process of communication and interactions. This research on PBIS sustainability will acknowledge the role of stakeholder perception, interactions and meanings, the school as a social organization where opinions are constantly in flux, and the importance of school leaders' ability to adapt to this context. Perceptions and experiences of those closely affected by the school's PBIS program will provide insights into the factors that contribute most significantly to successful sustainability.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this case study is to explore PBIS sustainability. I am seeking to provide a rich description of stakeholder interaction within a purposefully sampled case of PBIS sustainability in order to: (a) explore stakeholder meanings, values, beliefs, and behaviors within this system, (b) explore how PBIS sustainability is shaped within this environment, and (c) explore how power is negotiated within that process.

Research Questions

To fulfill the purpose of this study, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What are stakeholder meanings, values, and beliefs in relation to the PBIS program in the case study middle school?

2. What interactions and processes are used to construct sustainability within the case?
3. What power dynamics are present in the school?
4. How are power dynamics negotiated between administrators and teachers, specifically in relation to the PBIS program?
5. How are power dynamics, specifically in relation to the PBIS program, negotiated among teachers?
6. What are the key factors that contribute to successful sustainability of PBIS?

Methods

Raptor Middle School in Western North Carolina was chosen as the school to study because it had completed at least three years of successful PBIS implementation based on information gathered from the school-wide evaluation tool (SET) and office disciplinary referrals and was willing to grant permission for research. At the time of this study, student enrollment at Raptor Middle School was 906 students. Fifteen percent of the population was Hispanic, African-American, Asian, or mixed race. Forty-two percent qualified for free or reduced lunch. Fourteen percent were identified Exceptional Child (EC) and had active IEP goals. An additional 20% were identified as Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG). Three percent of students were identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP). Raptor Middle School served grades 6-8. The administrative team consisted of a principal and two assistant principals. The student services department includes two counselors. There were 57 full time certified teachers as well as five non-certified instructional staff members. Thirty percent of certified staff obtained advanced

degrees and 17% obtained National Board Certification. Over 50% have over ten years experience, 32% have 4-10 years experience and 18% have less than three years.

This research used a qualitative research design with a single case study to explore the sustainability of a PBIS program. The intention was to provide a rich description of stakeholder interaction in a purposefully sampled case of PBIS sustainability including the meanings, values, beliefs, and behaviors associated with the PBIS program. This institutional case study was intended to provide a comprehensive and in-depth look into PBIS sustainability using the framework of symbolic interactionism; an area where no research exists.

From April to October, the researcher carefully examined the PBIS program at the middle school using qualitative methods. Individual interviews took place with volunteers from a variety of stakeholder groups including administrators, teachers, counselors, and parents. Participants were asked to reflect on PBIS sustainability and their experiences as faculty and parents in a PBIS school using questions and an interview protocol (see Appendix C). Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed by the researcher and analyzed to determine stakeholder values, beliefs, and meanings in relation to the PBIS program.

Perhaps most important to understanding the process by which stakeholders construct the concept of PBIS sustainability through interaction, the researcher engaged in thorough observation of both the whole school daily routine and environment, as well as PBIS team meetings. The researcher attended monthly school-based PBIS meetings and took notes to analyze the team's interactions, particularly noting the team's leadership dynamics and the ways in which overall values and feelings towards the PBIS

team were communicated. The researcher also observed the school day collecting data regarding relationships, thoughts, feelings, and interactions between teachers, leaders both formal and informal, and students. Observations were completed using an observation guide sheet (see Appendix D). This method triangulation served to safeguard the results from credibility flaws.

Data was analyzed to determine emerging themes through a multi-step process. First, interview transcriptions and observation notes were color coded to highlight the emergence of patterns. Second, the researcher cut data into strips and pasted onto posters to re-examine emerging themes and patterns to be used as suggestions into how Raptor Middle School sustained PBIS.

Limitations and Delimitations

The study used a small sample of only one school. Results cannot be generalized to a larger sample or a different context. The study sample included one middle school in Western North Carolina. The results cannot be generalized to elementary or high schools or schools outside of this region. The sample school's demographics reflected a population of middle class students where discipline was not always seen as a major concern. Respondent responses and observation data reflect this unique demographic.

Respondents answered questions that asked them to reflect over a period of three years. Responses relied on respondent memory. Therefore responses could be incorrect at times, reflect bias, or be missing details from the period due to respondent memory. Interviews were conducted in the school setting during planning periods and before and after school. This environment could have led to a lack of careful reflection on the part of respondents.

Due to personal experience I strongly believe that, if implemented appropriately, PBIS is an effective behavior management program in middle school. I feel this may have biased my perception as I am a proponent of the program. Also in consideration of my role as a school administrator, time was often a factor in considering observation and interview times. During the school year, I had many professional obligations to my own school that limited the time spent in the research setting.

This case study intended to explore PBIS sustainability in one middle school. I looked to understand how school administrators, teachers, and parents maintained PBIS as a positive behavior management system and to provide rich description of stakeholder meanings, values, and beliefs in regard to the PBIS program. Triangulation of methods including the use of individual interviews and site observations were intended to produce results that accurately reflected the sustainability of the program at this school and minimize the possibility of error. However, the potential for researcher bias and the instability of participant response is inherent in any qualitative design. Research on PBIS sustainability is slim and while these findings should not be cause for assumptions of larger PBIS sustainability, the hope is that the results will have implications for additional inquiry into the topic.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Behavioral Issues Facing Schools

The first behavioral issue facing schools is the significant and sustained number of incidences occurring within school settings. Metzler, Biglan, Rusby, and Sprague (2001) concluded that escalating concerns in American schools include antisocial behavior, youth violence, and safety of students. Violent juvenile crimes continue to rise and reviews of schools indicate that bullying, robbery, assaults on students and teachers, gang recruitment, and injury or death by weapons are also worries at many schools. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2013) reported that in the 2011-2012 school year, schools reported 11,161 acts of violence with the most common infractions being possession of controlled substances, possession of a weapon, and assault on school personnel.

Negative student and parent perception of safety in school is another issue facing schools. Perceptions can lead to reality and students who view their school as a dangerous place are more likely to demonstrate violent behaviors in order to keep themselves safe (Horner et al., 2010). Also important as noted by Simonsen, Sugai, and Negron (2007) is that public perception holds that there is a lack of discipline in schools and student behavior is out of control.

As a result of behavioral issues facing schools, administrators across the country are faced with an increasing number of disciplinary referrals, suspensions, and expulsions. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2013) reported that in 2011-2012, schools reported 258,196 instances of assigned short-term out of school suspension. In addition, more and more students are entering school "(a) unprepared to

learn, (b) unable to cope with the demands of schooling, (c) unfamiliar with the social tasks involved in making friends and getting along with others, and (d) unaware of their negative social effect on others" (Marchant et al., 2009, p. 131). Also, issues with classroom management are noted as the most popular reason for teachers leaving their jobs (Bogen, 2009; Dupper & Meyer-Adams, 2002; Edwards, Mumford, Shillingford,, & Serra-Roldan, 2007).

Schachter (2010) reported that many administrators have chosen to implement a "zero-tolerance" policy for violence over the past few years as a result of rising disciplinary concerns. While this policy was aimed at reducing school violence, schools were no safer than before. Similarly, Newcomer & Lewis (2010), as well as Simonsen et al. (2008) found that other administrative teams have used the "get tough" approach, which focused on strict rules with punishment and exclusion as consequences to breaking the rules. Not only were these strategies ineffective in improving behavior, in many cases they served to increase the severity and frequency of undesirable behaviors such as attendance problems, disruptions, and even more aggressive behavior. So the administrators reacted by "getting tougher" which was also ineffective.

Warren et al. (2006) shared that problem behavior is a major obstacle for teachers to overcome in order for students to learn. Not only does inappropriate behavior inhibit the learning of the child who exhibits the behavior, it impedes the learning of others. Likewise, Scott, Park, Swain-Bradley, and Landers (2007) stated that the most common type of office referral is related to avoidance of class related activities. Adding to the research, Putnam, Horner, and Algozzine (2010) surmised that class absences reduce the opportunities a student has to gain the necessary skills to achieve and accordingly leads to

lower grades and test scores. While these behaviors are not violent and may include talking out, getting out of seat, passing notes, or just minor disruptions, teachers report that they take up a tremendous amount of instructional time (Walker & Sprague, 2000).

Many studies have shown that the amount of instructional time a student receives is related with academic achievement (Lassen et al., 2006). Putnam et al. (2010) found that an estimated 20 minutes of instructional clock time is lost for every office disciplinary referral that is written. In addition, students miss an average of one day for suspension or other punitive actions for each referral. In the past, these challenges have been addressed by increasing the number and intensity of penalizing discipline procedures (Sugai & Horner, 2002). Lassen et al. (2006) found that unfortunately, these strategies have not been effective and in some cases may have had an adverse effect on behavior. In addition, Mayer (1995) suggested that punitive school and classroom environments, unclear rules and expectations, and inconsistent consequences might lead to increased problem behaviors.

It is evident that student behavior and discipline are problematic. Marzano et al. (2003) suggested that effective teachers can prevent discipline problems in the classroom by engaging students and using materials and activities that keep student interest. Similarly, McGarity and Butts (2006) indicated that effective classroom management practices such as using instructional time wisely, differentiating instruction and attending to routine tasks effectively reduce disruptive behavior among learners. In an effort to address inappropriate behavior and issues that obstruct the learning process, schools nationwide are looking for an effective management system that promotes positive, safe,

cooperative student behavior. Newcomer & Lewis (2010) and Warren et al. (2006) suggested Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) as a possible solution.

Positive Behavior Intervention and Support

PBIS is a proactive strategy designed to address problem behaviors in many school settings (Sherrod, Getch, & Ziomek-Daigle, 2009). Scott et al. reported the foundational notion behind PBIS is that behavior is predictable and therefore preventable. Sugai and Horner (2006) described PBIS as "the integrations of valued outcomes, behavioral and biomedical science, empirically validated procedures, and systems change to enhance quality of life and minimize problem behaviors" (p. 246). Newcomer and Lewis (2010) stated that PBIS can be effective school-wide in reducing chronically challenging behavior, helping students react in a socially acceptable manner, and in meeting the needs of students who exhibit problem behavior. Dunlap et al. (2006) added that it can be adapted to a variety of school settings for students of all ages.

Wager (1999) stated that PBIS differs from traditional discipline programs because it looks at the underlying causes that led to the behavior instead of just punishing the child. Adding to this research, Taylor-Greene et al. (2002) contributed that the main focus of PBIS is to create strategies geared toward achieving appropriate social behaviors while preventing problem behaviors. It is designed to take the focus off of punitive solutions and concentrate on the causes of the behavior (Newcomer & Lewis, 2010). Likewise, Scott, White, Algozzine, and Algozzine (2009) found that PBIS is intended to inform all stakeholders (i.e., staff, parents, students, and community members) about unacceptable behavior, possible solutions to the behaviors, and ways to reinforce acceptable behavior. According to this research, the most important component of PBIS

is that it provides clear expectations to be followed by everyone and allows for all stakeholders to come to agreement on the behavioral goals of the school.

Efficacy of Positive Behavior Intervention and Support

The PBIS approach offers solutions for students whose behavior blocks their learning by providing (a) concepts underlying behavior, (b) a structure for providing supports, and (c) a set of evidence-based strategies that can be used in the school setting (Bohanon, Fenning, Eber, & Flannery, 2007). Schachter (2010) listed some alternatives to suspension that are frequently used with positive support models which include:

- alternative programming;
- behavior monitoring;
- appropriate in-school alternatives;
- community service;
- counseling;
- parent supervision in school;
- mini-courses;
- restitution;
- problem solving and contracting. (p. 30).

Muscott, Mann, Benjamin, and Gately (2004) added that there is also a family component that many systems incorporate into the PBIS model. The premise behind including family members into the plan is that a child's family is the expert on the child and can therefore add valuable information in how to effectively deal with the child.

McIntosh, Filter, Bennett, Ryan, & Sugai (2010) explained that PBIS involves the entire school population and can be implemented school-wide. According to Sugai &

Horner (2002), the components of PBIS include the following: (a) creating a PBIS planning team, (b) defining school-wide behavioral expectations, (c) teaching the behavioral expectations directly to the students, (d) development of procedures for acknowledging appropriate behaviors and discouraging negative ones, and (e) collecting and analyzing data to determine effectiveness. Other important factors include (a) staff participation and involvement, (b) administrative support, (c) development and willingness of a competent coach, and (d) district support (Handler et al., 2007).

Three Levels of Support in Positive Behavior Intervention and Support

Chitiyo and Wheeler (2009) found that the PBIS framework is made up of three levels of support: universal support, group support, and individual support. In some studies these levels of support are called primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of support (Bohanon et al., 2007). In more basic terms, Oswald, Safran, and Johanson (2005) noted that interventions are available school-wide, in specific classrooms, with individual students, and in non-classroom settings.

Primary Tier Intervention or Universal Support

Turnbull et al. (2002) stated that all three levels of support must be present in order for PBIS to be effective. Students will require support at varying levels and should have the opportunity to access the appropriate strength of involvement when necessary. Muscott et al. (2004) added that primary tier prevention or universal support involves behavior strategies that are designed for use with the entire school population and generally produce a positive response from 80%-90% of the school population. Bogen (2009, p. 37) clarified that in this first tier all students should have access to "a formal,

positive, preventive, social-skills curriculum that supports the academic mission of the school."

Turnbull et al. (2002) found that the goal of universal support is to increase appropriate behaviors in as many students as possible. More specifically, Fairbanks, Simonsen, & Sugai (2008, p. 49) indicated that this level of involvement focuses on: "(a) identifying expectations (b) defining expectations; (c) explicitly and directly teaching expectations; (d) posting expectations; and (e) designing a system to encourage, reinforce, and acknowledge appropriate behavior."

Newcomer (2009) identified the classroom as the area that often receives the least attention in a PBIS plan, but stated that the classroom is perhaps the most important example of where primary support should be evident. This research showed that it is vital for a PBIS plan to include classroom management plans that are consistent school-wide. This is possible through the development of classroom rules designed within the parameters of the school-wide expectations. Newcomer (2009) published that effective expectations should include the following:

- They are stated in positive terms. Effective rules identify the appropriate behavior and are specific enough to eliminate any confusion or ambiguity regarding the meaning.
- They are observable and measurable. When expectations refer to behaviors that can be seen and measured in terms of accurate performance, there is no question as to whether or not a rule has been followed.
- They are simple and age appropriate. Wording is brief and is easily understood by the target population.

- They are kept to a minimum. Five classroom expectations are sufficient for most settings. A good package of expectations will address compliance, movement around the classroom, talking, work completion, and readiness (p. 2).

Having specific expectations and well defined routines is a key component for maintaining appropriate behavior in the classroom and can be addressed through PBIS at the universal level (Newcomer, 2009). Research by Newcomer and Lewis (2010) found that successful universal systems enable schools to alter their environment by providing students with appropriate behaviors to replace inappropriate ones. When students do not follow expectations they are reminded of rules, re-taught expectations and re-directed to appropriate behavior. Under this model, teachers and staff teach and model student behavioral expectations.

Secondary Tier Intervention or Group Support

Unfortunately, even with solid primary prevention strategies in place, some students are unable to be successful and need a more comprehensive intervention. The next level of support is the secondary tier or targeted interventions, which are designed to meet the needs of students whose problem behaviors do not respond to primary tier interventions (Fairbanks et al., 2008), but are not exhibiting dangerous behavior toward themselves or others (Simonsen et al., 2008). Fairbanks et al. (2008) listed repeated disruptions of class, disrespect to teacher or classmates, or talking out at inappropriate times as examples. This research also stated that secondary tier interventions involve little extra time to apply and include features to: (a) increase structure for the student, (b) give the student more behavioral prompts, and (c) provide the student with more feedback and praise for behaving appropriately. Turnbull et al. (2002) contributed that

group support is another component of intervention at the secondary level. Some students do not respond at the universal or school-wide level, but aren't quite in need of individualized support. Teachers help students in this category by determining patterns of appropriate and inappropriate behavior for certain groups of students and establishing procedures to proactively manage unnecessary behaviors.

Tertiary Tier Intervention or Individual Support

Students who are unable to be successful with primary and secondary tier interventions require more strenuous support. This occurs as the tertiary tier intervention. Riffel and Turnbull (2010) identified that this individual level of support has not received as much attention as the group level of support in many PBIS programs, but is a crucial component if PBIS is to be school-wide and reach all students. Their research also connected the need for individual support to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 which stated that when a team is designing a child's individualized education plan, they must consider positive behavioral interventions and supports to help address behavioral issues when appropriate.

A functional behavior assessment or FBA is an example of a tertiary or individualized intervention. This level of support includes individual assessment of the student by a behavior support team that involves individuals who impact the child and creates goals for the student based on his/her specific needs (Fairbanks et al., 2008; Kincaid & Dunlap, 2010). Kincaid and Dunlap (2010) found that this more "person-centered" approach does not view the child in terms of behavior, but rather as a child and uses the individual's dreams, skills, and strengths to help understand the behavior and

create appropriate support. Goals are designed to help the child in the classroom, as well as in areas outside of school.

Newcomer and Lewis (2010, p. 2) stated that "individual systems of PBIS focus on integrated, team-based planning and problem solving to design individual support plans to prevent, reduce and replace problem behaviors and to develop, maintain and strengthen socially desirable behaviors." This is a more intense level of intervention for the student showing social difficulty and results in more rigorous involvement. Interventions at this level could also include "wraparound services" to assist the student. "Wraparound services" involve the student's family, professionals from outside agencies, the student, and all vested parties working as a team to create goals and strategies that meet the needs of the individual student (Turnbull et al., 2002). See Table 2 for a review of these three levels:

Table 2

Examples and Components of Three Levels

Prevention Tier	Core Elements
Primary	Behavioral expectations defined Behavioral expectations taught Reward system for appropriate behavior Continuum of consequences for problem behavior Continuous collection and use of data for decision-making
Secondary	Universal screening Progress monitoring for at-risk students System for increasing contingent adult feedback System for linking academic and behavioral performance System for increasing home/school communication Collection and use of data for decision-making
Tertiary	Functional Behavioral Assessment Team-based comprehensive assessment Linking of academic and behavior supports Individualized intervention based on assessment information focusing on (a) prevention of problem contexts, (b) instruction on functionally equivalent skills, and instruction on desired performance skills, (c) strategies for placing problem behavior on extinction, (d) strategies for enhancing contingence reward of desired behavior, and (e) use of negative or safety consequences if need. Collection of data for decision-making

Is school-wide positive behavior support an evidence-based practice (2009). Retrieved from http://www.pbis.org/research/default.aspx.

Implementation of Positive Behavior Intervention and Support

Team

Handler et al. (2007) found that once a school determines that behavioral change is needed and adopts PBIS as the school-wide system for change, a PBIS team must be formed. The team should include representatives across disciplines including: specialists, paraprofessionals, support personnel, administrators, teachers from varying grades and subject areas, and community members or parents. Similarly, Dunlap et al. (2006) contributed that the PBIS team is the heart of effective school-wide implementation. In addition, George and Martinez (2007) stated that this team will provide the vision, leadership, and resources necessary to implement an effective program.

Data

A well-functioning team attends regular planning meetings and communicates effectively with the entire staff. It is the team's job to review school information and assess the needs of the students in the school (Warren et al., 2006). Research from Dunlap et al. (2006) shared that the team should determine what types of data are important to review and use those results to determine what supports are needed. Horner et al. (2010, p. 3) stated that data should be:

> (a) an accurate reflection of behavior, (b) collected with consistency and precision, (c) straightforward and simple to collect, (d) easily summarized and reported on a regular basis, and (e) reviewed regularly and systematically in response to specific evaluation questions to ensure meaningful action planning can be supported.

Safran (2006) contributed that staff surveys, student surveys, teacher input, arrests, attendance, tardies, and office referrals can present valuable information concerning a school's discipline patterns and assessing areas of need.

PBIS is a data driven model, and ongoing analysis of data is important to make sure that the created expectations and interventions are updated to meet the needs of all students in a school. Though not an effective source of determining social issues with students and not to be used in isolation, office disciplinary referrals (ODRs) are perhaps the best indicator of behavioral patterns because they provide information in three areas: (a) a guide in the development and selection of primary, secondary, and tertiary programs; (b) an outcome measure with which to assess the effectiveness of those programs; and (c) an early screening procedure for identifying children who may benefit from secondary and tertiary programs (Nelson, Benner, Reid, Epstein, & Currin, 2002, p. 183).

Horner et al. (2010, p.5) found that ODRs should be monitored by: (a) noting the average number of referrals per month, (b) the frequency of referrals per type of problem behavior, (c) the frequency of referrals per student, and (d) the frequency of referrals per location in the school. Sharing this idea, Walker, Cheney, Stage, and Blum (2005) added that when using ODRs in combination with other school-wide screening processes, schools have the ability to identify more at-risk students and target them with interventions in a proactive manner.

Warren et al. (2006) stated that the consistent collection of this and other data is an integral part of the success of PBIS in helping to inform and guide the instruction. Furthermore, Marchant et al. (2009) concluded that data should be organized into

behaviors, locations, and time of day so that it can be analyzed to determine the school's needs. Frequency of infractions should also be monitored. The ability to predict problems is crucial in assisting proactive planning, and data helps PBIS team members see where and when problems are occurring. Research by both Warren et al. (2006) and Handler et al. (2007) showed that once the data-driven assessment is complete, the team forms interventions that meet the needs of the school and the staff.

Teacher Role

Handler et al. (2007) found that an additional part of the achievement of PBIS or any intervention program is staff "buy-in". It is up to the team to assess that "buy-in" regularly. This can be done formally or informally, and the results should be used to guide decisions regarding school needs. Metzler et al. (2001) contributed that strategies to increase staff participation include the availability of teacher time to work, the teacher's perception of the plan being implemented, appropriate resource, and administrative support. To clarify, Simonsen (2008) established that administration and the PBIS team can help motivate teachers by recognizing them for their efforts with PBIS. Just as students need to have clearly defined expectations, teachers need clarity as well. They should know what they are expected to teach, when they are expected to teach it, and how frequently they are to recognize and reward students for responding appropriately. As teachers meet these expectations, school leadership should have a system for recognizing them.

Expectations

Once the school's needs and appropriate interventions have been identified, a set of clearly defined, positively stated behavior expectations are created (Warren et al.,

2006). Marchant et al. (2009) suggested that positively stated expectations should be posted in classrooms, hallways, common areas, and any other targeted area of the school to remind students of appropriate behavior. Sugai and Horner (2002) added that expectations should be separated into school-wide goals, classroom goals, non-classroom goals, and individual student goals.

After the behavioral expectations are defined, Sugai and Lewis (1996) concluded that they must be taught to the students. Their research found that the teaching of expectations must include the following: (a) clear instruction on the expectations and how they apply in various settings around the school, (b) demonstrations of appropriate behavior and social skills, and (c) opportunities for students to practice these skills through role-plays in different settings within the school. Likewise, Taylor-Greene, Brown, Nelson, Longton, Gassman, Cohen, Swartz, Horner, Sugai, and Hall (1997) added that students also needed to: (a) receive feedback on their performances, (b) be rewarded with certificates, and (c) be recognized publicly for behaving appropriately. Sugai and Horner (2002) reinforced that expectations should be taught in the beginning of the school year and at crucial times throughout the year.

Reinforcement

Reinforcement is essential in any PBIS program (Newcomer, 2009; Sugai & Horner, 2010). Newcomer (2009, p. 9) published that if used properly, positive reinforcement will increase the rate of a desired behavior and help motivate students. Types of reinforcement can include: social reinforcement (i.e. praise, recognition), activity reinforcers (e.g. special privileges), material reinforcers (tangible items), and token reinforcers (i.e. items exchanged for other reinforcers). Metzler et al. (2001) found

that some schools use tickets called "T.N.T" or "teachers noticing talent" as motivation. Tickets are given to students who behave appropriately and are submitted into a prize box for a weekly drawing. Other incentives include having "funds" deposited into a checking account for good grades, attendance, or positive behavior. The student can use the "funds" at the school store or school assemblies. On the other hand, Sugai and Horner (2010) established that negative reinforcement is also part of some programs. When applied, negative reinforcement can also help increase the likelihood of a particular behavior by removing or eliminating an undesirable outcome if proper behavior is observed.

Benefits and Limitations of Positive Behavior Intervention and Support

Benefits

There is growing evidence to support the benefits of PBIS in public schools. PBIS is most common among elementary schools, but is becoming increasingly popular at the middle and high school levels. Strategies are consistent throughout grade levels, though more emphasis is placed on choice and "self-determination" at the secondary level (Bohanon et al., 2007). According to a recent article in Education Week (2012), Nirvi Shah reported that around 18,300 schools nationwide are now implementing PBIS as a behavior management program. Scott et al. (2007, p. 231) stated that PBIS features "prediction and prevention, development of rules, routines and physical arrangements, consistent implementation, and evaluation" to help identify and proactively manage problem behaviors while recognizing and reinforcing appropriate ones.

Several studies have proven that PBIS benefits schools. Lassen et al. (2006) concluded that PBIS has been shown to reduce ODRs resulting in more time in class for

students. Long-term suspensions were also reduced while implementing this model. In a study focusing on the effects of PBIS on rural middle school students in Texas; Ruiz, Ruiz, and Sherman (2012) discovered a reduction in the number of students leaving class without permission, less disobedience, and fewer disruptive behaviors. They also found a decrease in the number of incidents of disrespect and a lower number of incidents of profanity. Additional research by Caldarella, Shatzer, Gray, Young, and Young (2011) demonstrated a statistically significant decrease in students being late to class, unexcused absences, and ODRs in a middle school in the western United States. "The treatment school saved an estimated 643 student days in the classroom, due to the reduction of absences and 213 hours of class time due to reduced tardiness (assuming students were late an average of five minutes per tardy)" (p. 9). Teachers at this middle school also reported improved perceptions of school leadership over the four years of the study and related that improvement to the implementation of PBIS. Similarly, in a study by Kelm and McIntosh (2012) that sought to determine the effects of PBIS on teacher self-efficacy, teachers at PBIS schools were found to be more prepared to respond to individual and varying student needs, as well as better able to engage students in learning. Thus teachers at PBIS schools had a higher sense of self-efficacy than those at non-PBIS schools.

Putnam, Horner, and Algozzine (2010) added that many studies conducted in elementary, middle, and high schools have shown that PBIS creates an increase in academic achievement as evidenced by improved scores on standardized testes. Putnam et al. (2010, p. 6) stated, "If problem behavior and academics are linked, each affects the other, and if acceptable instruction is in place, then improving the behavioral climate of

the school will allow that instruction to be more effective." In support, Chitiyo, Makweche-Chitiyo, Park, Ametepee, and Chitiyo (2011) found a positive correlation of .40 between improved behavior and academic achievement. Similar results were reported by Farkas et al. (2012) as their research of PBIS in an alternative school setting resulted in an increase in the percentage of students achieving higher academically and also showed a reduction in the number of ODRs. In addition, Bradshaw, Koth, Thornton, and Leaf (2009) reported comparable results from their study which focused on overall school climate. They stated that "PBIS training was associated with significant improvements in resource influence, staff affiliation, academic emphasis, and the overall organizational health inventory score" (p. 108).

Limitations

Though support for PBIS is growing rapidly, there are issues that reduce its effectiveness. In an interview with Bogen (2009, p. 39), George Sugai suggested that in actual practice, too much time is spent reacting to negative behavior and positive behavior isn't taught. A study by Chitiyo and Wheeler (2009) advocated that problems include insufficient time and an uncertainty with what to do with collected data. Other difficulties to overcome, as published by Kincaid, Childs, Blasé, and Wallace (2007, p. 178) include (a) identifying misperceptions of PBIS, (b) team training, (c) data issues as barriers, (d) team functioning, (e) communication, (f) reward systems, and (g) staff "buy-in."

Metzler et al. (2001) determined that a lack of support and training for teachers, overly complex strategies, and weak administration can also complicate the effectiveness of the program. Scott et al. (2009) added that ultimately there are some students who are

just unwilling to comply with any school-wide intervention and demand extensive individualized supports. Furthermore, Tincani (2007) stated that it is also worth noting that PBIS is a developing approach and studies that maintain a highly controlled focus group are hard to design so some lessen the validity of the outcomes.

School-wide Evaluation Tool

Research by Horner, Todd, Lewis-Palmer, Irvin, Sugai and Boland (2004, p. 11) suggested that "a school is implementing the primary prevention practices taught by PBIS when both School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET) total and expectations taught subscale scores are at least 80%." The SET is a standardized rubric used to evaluate a school's fidelity in implementing PBIS. As stated in the SET manual (2003, p. 2) "the SET is a research-validated instrument that is designed to assess and evaluate the critical features of school-wide effective behavior support across an academic year." The manual also gives details on how to prepare, conduct, and score a SET evaluation. According to Horner et al, (2004) feature areas include "expectations defined, behavioral expectations taught, acknowledgement procedures, correction procedures, monitoring and evaluation, management, and district level support." According to Frank, Horner, and Anderson (2009), the majority of schools implementing PBIS find an 80% success rate on a SET observation within the first year of implementation. Frank et al. (2009) also report that socio-economic status has little relationship with a school attaining the 80% goal but racial diversity does impact this rate of success. Schools with medium diversity outperformed both low and high diversity schools in SET scores.

Sustainability

Sustainability Defined

Research by Savayo and Spiro (2012) highlighted the importance of program sustainability. Savayo and Spiro (2012) described sustainability as a moral imperative—ending a program with a community still in need of services can have devastating effects on the population in need. Program sustainability has been explained as a durable and long term program implementation at a level of fidelity that continues to produce valued and intended outcomes (Han & Weiss, 2005). In addition, McIntosh, Horner, and Sugai (2009) shared that sustainability is attained when a program is no longer identified in terms of an initiative or project. Instead, the program is institutionalized and becomes common practice around the school. This research adopted Han and Weiss' definition of sustainability because it best supports available data in regards to fidelity of implementation standards such as the SET evaluation tool.

Program Sustainability in Health Care

Although sustainability in education has garnered significantly less attention, several researchers in the field of health care have investigated this phenomenon. A number of these studies have focused on stages of sustainability. Scheirer (2005) analyzed the lifecycle of programs designed to improve health or other services. She places sustainability in a range of stages that includes initiation, development, implementation, sustainability and dissemination. Within this context she defined the sustainability stage as maintenance of program components after initial funding is removed. Pluye, Potvin, Denis, and Pelletier (2004) also researched program sustainability in terms of health care initiatives. Under their model, sustainability depends on routinization, the point at which new initiatives are stable, accepted, and organizationally entrenched. Four characteristics identify organizational routinization:

memory, adaption, values and rules. Routines become memorized in organizations through time and experience, procedures tend to be adapted (for better or worse) to meet local needs through routinization. Common goals and beliefs will conform around programs that are successful, and finally organizational structure and rules become part of everyday procedure. Pluye et al (2004, p. 489) went on to articulate four distinct degrees of sustainability: (a) absence of sustainability; (b) precarious sustainability in which some program activities are continued unofficially; (c) weak sustainability in which some official activities in the program are continued but not routinized and (d) full sustainability including routinization.

Other studies have explored factors related to sustainability. Evashwick and Ory (2003) examined several factors integral to sustaining innovative programs. These included strong leadership, community involvement, involvement of large organizations, documentation of program outcomes, and financial self-sufficiency. After interviewing and surveying health care professionals involved with health care program implementation, they concluded that funding is the greatest challenge in sustainability, followed by personnel turnover and lack of time. These authors conclude that the greatest factors in successfully sustaining initiatives are collaboration with larger organizations and establishing ties to the local community.

Savaya and Spiro (2011) examined several variables involved in sustainability of social programs. Their model was based on three stages—continuation, institutionalization, and duration of new programs. After researching 197 social projects across the nation, they concluded that diversity of funding sources and strong leadership dedicated to the program's success were the key factors in sustainability. Various

research models exploring the concept of sustainability frame the question around models of programs' success and factors indicating likely longevity of social and health programs. Financial stability and strong leadership are key factors under each model.

Power Dynamics Affecting Program Sustainability

Like many organizations, schools are often undergoing change. New programs are continuously being implemented and it is important that the effective programs be sustained. In order for this to occur, power must be negotiated in a manner that allows people to communicate and collaborate about decisions that will affect them. According to research on power dynamics and organizational change by Boonstra and Gravenhorst (1998), the most important contributor to realizing sustainable change is not any one type of power structure; "The most important thing that counts is true dialogue which facilitates open communication and rational arguments that are open to exploration" (p. 110). Allowing people the opportunity to talk about their ideas and to create a set of shared values is an invaluable part of program sustainability. This idea is echoed by French and Bell (1995) who found that power dynamics are most effective when navigated in a way that allows all stakeholders a chance to reach their goals collectively, while also enabling each person an opportunity to reach his or her personal goals. It is important that people are able to work together when making decisions that affect them (Greiner & Schein, 1988). Collaboration is a vital component in the power structure of program change and sustainability.

Also imperative to sustaining any program at the school level is the ability for teachers to be authentic owners of the program. The amount of power teachers hold is important to overall program sustainability. Ingersoll (1996) found "that the amount of

power teachers hold is the most consequential factor for how well schools function" (p. 160). This is especially true in relation to a school's disciplinary model. Though the research found a small connection between teacher input into instructional decisions and student performance, there was a strong link between teachers' ownership over behavioral expectations and conflict within the school. The more input teachers had into creating the expectations, the less conflict was noted between students, teachers, and administration (Ingersoll, 1996). Though issues such as wearing hats in school may seem inconsequential to some, they are important to teachers and teachers want to have input into how such issues are handled. Teachers need to have power in the decision-making processes that affect them. It is only when this power is achieved that teachers feel that they are valuable contributors to the program.

Frequently, teachers are not only dismissed from the decision making processes that affect them, but they are the last to know. This is not conducive to a healthy work environment and causes teachers to feel powerless. Schools with an effective school culture empower teachers. Teachers' input is sought before decisions are made and before programs are implemented (Adams, 2007). Teachers are given power to help decide what will or what will not work for them. This power must be obtained if a program is to be sustained.

General School-based Program Sustainability

As in other fields, education researchers have also investigated the concept of program sustainability. Adelman and Taylor (2003) looked at the concept of project sustainability in schools. They wrote that any project should begin implementation with sustainability as an end goal. In their research, they found that "the keys to sustainability

are clarifying value and demonstrating feasibility (p.2)." Specifically, this involved garnering support and buy-in among stakeholders, including a program in a school's vision, mission, and goals, and reinforcing how the program fits in with specific aims for instructional improvement (Adelman & Taylor, 2003). Motivating key groups of stakeholders to take ownership of programs is a key factor under this model.

Vogel, Seifer and Gelmon (2010) researched the long-term sustainability of service-learning programs in higher education institutions. They noted that most grants for service projects provide three to five years funding but most service learning programs take five to ten years to become institutionalized in universities. They found keys to sustainability include the ability of service learning programs to adapt to changing priorities, the ties between the project and the school's mission, faculty support and the ties of service learning into required classes.

Saunders, Pate, Dowda, Ward, Epping, and Dishman (2012) wrote about the Lifestyle Education for Activity Program (LEAP). They offered a model of sustainability that included support from administration, an active physical activity team, prominent messages promoting physical activity around the school and adult modeling of physical activity. Gunn (2010) researched sustainability in terms of school-based technology initiatives or e-learning projects. Gunn defined sustainability as the point in which technology is implemented through all courses of study, e-learning tools have been adapted for classrooms beyond the original intent and e-learning is utilized and adapted by teachers outside the originators of specific programs. Han and Weiss (2005) explored the sustainability of school-based mental health programs. They noted that the bulk of field research concentrates on implementation rather than sustainability. They identified

four key factors to sustainability: administrative support, teacher self-efficacy beliefs, the burnout factor, and teacher buy-in and initial program success during implementation (p. 667).

PBIS Sustainability

Few studies in the PBIS literature have dealt directly with the issue of program sustainability in relation to Positive Behavior Interventions and Support. McIntosh et al. (2012) studied 217 schools from across the United States, analyzing results of a validated measure to identify key factors in successfully sustained implementation. These researchers found that two factors contributed significantly to sustained implementation—team use of data at the school level and capacity building at the district level. Coffey and Horner (2012) have also researched PBIS program sustainability. They specifically researched 117 schools and identified two primary factors in the sustainability of PBIS—administrative support and open communication between administration and staff, and the use of data. In a different study, Sugai and Horner (2006) noted that sustained and consistent use of PBIS practices are still not thoroughly researched, although the model has proven successful in reducing problem behaviors in the implementation stage. Sugai and Horner (2006) recommended the use of a strong leadership team in order to give PBIS its best chance at sustaining successfully in schools and districts. Finally, Sparks (2007) identified strong administrative support and PBIS team as key factors in successful sustainability of PBIS.

Data-driven decision making is one factor the research identified as key to PBIS sustainability (McIntosh, et al. (2012); Sugai and Horner (2006); Coffey and Horner (2012). Data needs to be present in communications between PBIS team, administration,

and staff in order to develop and discuss goals and status of PBIS applications at a school. "Data helps administrators to make decisions about programming and modification of instructional practices and aspects of the learning and social environment" (Coffey and Horner, 2012, p. 418). McIntosh et al. (2012) added that data needs to be collected regularly and reviewed consistently and shared with staff and stakeholders. Sugai and Horner (2006) also clarified that data-based decision making helps ensure sustainability as it helps provide support for implementations of new ideas within the PBIS framework and leads to measurable outcomes. Data should include ODR's, suspension information, support options for students, functional behavioral assessments, and the availability of wraparound services.

The PBIS team structure has also been identified as key to PBIS sustainability. According to McIntosh et al. (2012), effective school-based PBIS teams meet regularly to analyze data, use data to make decisions, and share data with the whole school. According to Sugai and Horner (2006), a team helps ensure program visibility, funding, training, coaching and demonstrations of best practice. These researchers went on to elaborate that the team should be made up of key stakeholders including teachers at various levels, district and school-based administrators, community members and even school board members (p. 251). McIntosh et al. (2012) emphasized the need for teams to meet regularly, run efficient meetings, and focus on data-driven instruction. They added that training in meeting efficiency can add to the effectiveness of a PBIS team structure. Likewise, Coffey and Horner (2012) found that a cohesive team with time to collaborate and membership of respected, veteran teachers is ideal. In *Implementation and Sustainability of Positive Behavior Systems in Elementary Schools,* Sparks (2007, p.4)

noted that a strong PBIS team is crucial to sustaining a PBIS program, as it can serve as a "site based steering mechanism" for the process. In support of the importance of a strong PBIS team, Sugai and Horner (2006) added that an effective team requires support from district and school officials in terms of funding, visibility of the PBIS program and political support.

According to Coffey and Horner (2012), the third component of PBIS sustainability is administrative leadership. Leaders provide direction and motivation and help screen teachers from distracters and outside pressures that might take focus from PBIS programs. Coffey and Horner (2012) added that in order for leaders to become a determinate factor in PBIS sustainability, they must communicate positively about the program and demonstrate PBIS as a school goal and priority. Sharing the idea of a need for administrative support, McIntosh et al. (2012) also discussed the importance of administrative leadership. They added that school administrators must ensure PBIS leadership teams meet consistently and have access to relevant data. District administrators must show PBIS as a priority by offering district coaching and school-level trainings. Additionally, Sparks (2007) also listed strong principal oversight to the PBIS program as a key factor in sustainability. Administrative support, PBIS team structures, and a commitment to data are clearly important factors in sustaining PBIS programs in schools. Finally, as noted earlier, while each study presented a different model, the four most common factors were: the presence of a PBIS leadership team, strong administrative support, quality professional development, and the use of data to guide decisions.

Need for the Current Study

Although implementation of PBIS in the public school setting is relatively new, it is hoped that the benefits will be long lasting. The sustainability of PBIS may depend on adult behavior and whether or not they "buy-in" to the (a) identifying valued outcomes, (b) identifying and modifying practices, and (c) implementing practices (McIntosh et al., 2009, p. 11). Scott et al. (2009) suggested one technique to help with staff "buy-in" is for administrators to encourage and reinforce teachers who are frequently practicing PBIS strategies. In the study performed by McIntosh et al. (2009), it is suggested that once schools have been successfully utilizing PBIS for three years, it is likely the program will continue to be effective. The proactive strategies utilized in the PBIS process are more likely to elicit a safer, more disciplined school and create an environment that allows teachers more time to teach instead of dealing with discipline issues (Warren et al., 2006). Research by George and Martinez (2007) added that though developing and maintaining a successful PBIS program may seem like a difficult process, substantial benefits will result for students, faculty, and parents.

Clearly PBIS sustainability is a topic that demands more research. Extensive research on sustainability models exists outside the field of education and, to a lesser extent, in terms of general program sustainability in schools. PBIS is well documented as a successful program for reducing behavioral issues in schools. Program implementation models and studies have been heavily published. Several factors seem to lead to PBIS program sustainability but there remains work to be done in the field. This research is designed to add to the great body of academic literature that exists involving the benefits of PBIS in public schools by examining sustainability. I intend to contribute to the field by providing an in-depth examination, using a single case study approach within a

framework of symbolic interactionism, which will highlight the stakeholder perceptions, personal meanings, values, and beliefs that contribute to the sustainability of the program. Schools are organizations built around people and this study intends to research the phenomenon of PBIS sustainability by gathering qualitative data based in individual interview and researcher observation in order to examine how stakeholder perceptions, meanings, beliefs, and values of PBIS shape successful implementation.

There are no studies published that use the lens of symbolic interactionism to frame a qualitative exploration of the concept of PBIS sustainability employing a single case study model. Existing PBIS sustainability research is quantitative in nature and involves multiple settings. This qualitative approach fills a literature gap by examining the phenomenon closely in a single school. This research intends to provide a richer understanding of the factors that contribute to sustaining the program over time. In providing stakeholders the opportunity to express feelings, values, interactions, and experiences about the program and its sustainability over time; and conducting extensive observations, this case study will expand on the current body of PBIS sustainability literature by adding the unique perspective of individuals involved in the process.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The Qualitative Research Paradigm

The purpose of this case study is to explore PBIS sustainability through the lens of symbolic interactionism. Program sustainability has been defined as a durable and long term program implementation at a level of fidelity that continues to produce valued and intended outcomes (Han & Weiss, 2005). I am seeking to understand how the values, meanings, and beliefs of teachers and leaders, both formal and informal, at one middle school shaped the sustainability of PBIS as a positive behavior management system and to gain a better understanding of the experiences of stakeholders while utilizing this program. Researching this phenomenon depends on gathering and closely examining perspectives, interactions, and perceptions from a wide range of school personnel and community members.

Qualitative case study methods were employed in this study. Qualitative research methods provide a holistic account of a problem or issue. This can involve finding multiple perspectives, identifying multiple factors involved in a situation, or generally giving a more complete and in-depth picture of a problem or issue as it emerges (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative researchers often begin with a theoretical design or lens with which to frame a situation. Methods of qualitative research include observation, qualitative interviews with focus groups or individuals, and the collection of materials and documents (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Characteristics unique to qualitative design include research completed in natural settings, the researcher as primary instrument in data collection, an emphasis on descriptive data, focus on participant perceptions and experiences, and attention to process as well as outcomes (Creswell, 2009).

This research uses a qualitative research design with a single case study to explore the sustainability of a PBIS program in one middle school through the lens of symbolic interactionism. As Orum, Feagin, and Sjoberg (1991) explained, "a case study is an in-depth, multifaceted investigation, using qualitative research methods, of a single phenomenon. The study is conducted in great detail and often relies on the use of several data sources" (p. 2). A case study is an appropriate methodology when a holistic picture or in-depth investigation is the research goal. Case studies are also designed to bring out details from the viewpoint of participants (Tellis, 1997), and are often "more interested in describing the activities of the group instead of identifying shared patterns of behavior exhibited by the group" (Creswell, 2008, p. 476). Case study methodology has several strengths. Using this methodology, the researcher is able to study subjects in a natural environment, gather perspectives from numerous sources, and examine changes over time (Orum et al., 1991).

This study intends to provide a rich description of stakeholder interaction to explore meanings, values, beliefs and behaviors that contribute to PBIS sustainability in one purposefully sampled middle school. Case study methodology is chosen as the best fit for this research for several reasons. First, multiple perspectives from various stakeholders are important in analyzing the factors behind whole school PBIS sustainability. Second, the case study allows the researcher to observe the PBIS program at the school in a natural environment (Meyer and Patton, 2001). Finally, the case study approach fits well under the overarching framework of symbolic interactionism, as it allows the researcher to examine how communication and interaction among stakeholders can change perspectives and opinions, and even shape cognitive understandings and

meanings over time (Orum et al., 1991). According to Tower, Rowe, and Wallis (2012) symbolic interactionism is methodologically useful in research settings as it can contribute to the development of policies and practices by drawing on the perspectives and experiences of stakeholders. Perhaps the most compelling reason for utilizing this approach was best stated by Charon (2007), "If we want to understand cause, focus on social interaction" (p. 29).

Setting and Participants

Case Description

This study was conducted at Raptor Middle School (pseudonym), located in a rural school district in Western North Carolina. As noted previously, current enrollment at Raptor Middle School is 906 students in grades 6-8. Fifteen percent of the population is minority including Hispanic, African-American, Asian, or mixed race. Forty two percent of students receive free or reduced lunch. Fourteen percent of students are identified Exceptional Child (EC), 20% are identified as Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG), and an additional three percent are identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP). The certified staff includes an administrative team of a principal and two assistant principals, two counselors, and a media center coordinator. There are 57 full time certified teachers as well as four non-certified instructional staff members. Thirty percent of certified staff have advanced degrees and 23 are Nationally Board Certified. Over 50% of teachers have more than ten years experience, 32% have between 4-10 years experience and 18% have less than three years. See table 3 below:

Table 3

Raptor Middle School Teacher Profile – State and District Comparison

	North Carolina (average for schools with similar grade ranges)	District (average for schools with similar grade ranges)	Raptor Middle School
Licensed Staff	43	51	57
Highly Qualified	99%	100%	100%
Advanced Degrees	28%	25%	30%
National Board Certification	6	15	23
0-3 Years Experience	19%	17%	18%
4-10 Years Experience	31%	27%	32%
10+ Years Experience	50%	56%	51%

According to Julie Weatherman, PBIS Coordinator for Region 8, there are currently twenty middle schools in Western North Carolina that have implemented PBIS. Of these, only six middle schools are beyond the first three years of implementation. Raptor Middle School fit the criteria for this case study with its adequate PBIS implementation (80% implementation or above) for the last three years on the School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET), a research validated external evaluation of PBIS fidelity of implementation (Sugai & Horner, 2002). According to the SET Implementation Manual (Palmer, Horner, Sugai, Sampson, & Phillips, 2012), this tool evaluates "expectations defined, behavioral expectations taught, acknowledgement procedures, correction procedures, monitoring and evaluation, management, and district level support" (p. 1). The school represents a purposeful sampling strategy. As Rossman and Rallis (2003) explain, an ideal site is one where "entry is possible, there is a likelihood of being able to

build strong relationships with the participants, and there is a rich mix of the process or structures of interest" (p. 136). Raptor Middle School met these criteria and was selected as a "typical case", defined by Cohen and Crabtree (2006) as "the process of selecting or searching for cases that are not in any way atypical, extreme, deviant, or unusual…identifying typical cases can help a researcher identify and understand the key aspects of a phenomenon" (www.qualres.org/Hometypi-3809.html). According to Creswell (2008), "Typical sampling is a form of purposeful sampling in which the researcher studies a person or site that is 'typical' to those unfamiliar to the situation" (p. 216).

Raptor Middle School first implemented its PBIS program in 2007. The first year of implementation saw a reduction in student disciplinary referrals and out of school suspension (OSS) days assigned. In the three years following, both recorded referrals and assigned OSS days have remained steadily below the numbers found previous to implementation. School Wide Evaluation Tool (SET) evaluation scores have also stayed steadily above the acceptable 80% mark. The data are represented in Table 4 below.

Table 4

Discipline and SET Scores for Raptor Middle School since PBIS Implementation

School Year	SET Score	Recorded Referrals	OSS days assigned
2006-2007 Pre-PBIS Implementation	N/A	650	349
2007-2008 Implementation	88%	600	299
2008-2009	88%	450	200
2009-2010	91%	500	190
2010-2011	88%	525	195
2011-2012	95%	475	200
2012-2013	Not available	Not available	Not available

Raptor Middle School PBIS Program

Raptor Middle School's school-wide PBIS program categorized desired student behaviors with the categories of Responsibility, Manners, and Spirit. The school's behavior plan specified the concepts throughout different locations and contexts of the school day including hallway, cafeteria, assembly, bathroom, bus, car rider line, and extra-curriculars. The PBIS plan utilized a token or coin system to reward positive behaviors on a daily basis. Teachers gave tokens when they observed positive behaviors. Students with these tokens received rewards such as preferential seating in the cafeteria, the freedom to leave two minutes early at dismissal, and the privilege of purchasing items at a school store with the tokens. In addition, the administration and counseling staff randomly rewarded students wearing wristbands with gift cards or small treats in the

cafeteria. Several times during the year, the school held a random drawing for larger prizes with students who received tokens at any time eligible. Teachers signed their names to tokens when they gave them to students. On a weekly basis, teacher names were also drawn from among those who gave out tokens. Teachers received gift cards and small gifts when their names were drawn.

The system also utilized a long-term reward strategy, the AAA card. Students received AAA cards after report cards were released at nine week intervals. To earn the AAA card students earned points in three categories—academics, attitude, and attendance. Students received three points for making all A's, two points for making A-B honor roll and one point for making all A's, B's, C's. Students received three points if they had no discipline referrals and two points if they received only one referral in a nine week period. Students who had perfect attendance in a nine week period received three points, students who only missed one day of school received two points, and students missing two days of school received one point. To earn the AAA card, students needed to receive a total of six points including at least one point in each category.

The Raptor Middle School PBIS program also relied on data collection and a team approach. Teachers documented misbehavior on both minor and major referral forms. Data, including the numbers of minor and major referrals that were given to students monthly and both in-school and out-of-school suspension information, was shared with teachers by administration and the PBIS team at monthly meetings. This data included information on individual students, location of referrals, referrals by teacher, and referrals by misbehavior type. The school used this information to continually brainstorm solutions to problems and interventions to misbehaviors. The

PBIS team met monthly to discuss concerns from staff, individual student needs, and methods of improving the PBIS system at the school.

Design

Data Collection Instruments

Multiple sources of data were used in this research. Qualitative data collected were: 1) open-ended questions in individual interview settings and 2) direct observation including observation of both school environment and PBIS Leadership Team meetings. As Tellis (1997) explained:

> The rationale for using multiple sources of data is the triangulation of evidence. Triangulation increases the credibility of the data and the process of gathering it. In the context of data collection, triangulation serves to corroborate the data gathered from other sources. (p. 10)

Interviewing can lead to rich, insightful data and allows the researcher to focus on a particular issue or topic in-depth. Interviews allow respondents to fully respond in an anonymous and confidential setting. As Gibbs (1997) explained, individual interview settings aim to allow respondents to express freely the personal meanings, values, and beliefs they associate with the research topic.

Direct observation allows the researcher to document events in real time and with consideration of real-life context (Meyer and Patton, 2001). People are continuously in a recurring pattern of change. They take part in multiple situations daily. How they respond to each circumstance is dependent upon several things that may include; their familiarity with the surroundings, cultural expectations of the situation, the behavior or values of the people with them, and how they have chosen to internalize the situation as a

whole. These are all components of social interactionism and "participant observation is founded on the theory of symbolic interactionism" (http://www.csulb.edu/~msaintg/ppa696/696quali.htm, p. 2) as it allows the researcher to witness this phenomenon.

Relevant Definitions

1. *Positive Behavior Intervention and Support* – A prevention-minded approach to student discipline that is characterized by its focus on defining and teaching behavioral expectations, rewarding appropriate behaviors, continual evaluation of its effectiveness, and the integration of supports for individuals, groups, the school as a whole, and school/family/community partnerships (Warren et al., 2006, p. 188).
2. *Sustainability* – A durable and long term program implementation at a level of fidelity that continues to produce valued and intended outcomes (Han and Weiss, 2005).
3. *School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET)* – A standardized rubric used to evaluate a school's fidelity in implementing PBIS. As stated in the SET manual (2003, p. 2) "the SET is a research-validated instrument that is designed to assess and evaluate the critical features of school-wide effective behavior support across an academic year."

Data Collection Procedures

The participants in the study represented major stakeholders including administrators, counselors, teachers, and parents. PBIS team meetings were observed and transcribed. A written request for parent volunteers for the study was mailed home

and a phone call was made to all parents. From respondent parents, two were selected to interview. Purposeful sampling was used in this instance. Creswell (2013) suggested this type of sampling to add credibility when the sampling size is too large.

Maximum variation sampling was chosen as the sampling method for faculty. Patton (2002) stated "This strategy for purposeful sampling aims at capturing and describing the central themes that cut across a great deal of variation" (p. 235). While dealing with a small sample, like faculty from one school, maximum variation sampling allowed the researcher access to the most heterogeneous sample possible. Selection of persons for interview was based not on a concern for equal representation among stakeholders, but purposeful in an attempt to answer the research questions grounded in sustainability of PBIS. The attempt of this study was not to generalize the findings to other settings, but to provide rich description of stakeholder meanings, values, beliefs, and behaviors in relation to PBIS. Through the lens of symbolic interactionism, people work in an ever-changing environment and their response to each situation is also individualized and dependent of the formation of values, beliefs, and meaning. Because of this, the researcher observed in the natural setting of the study – the school. Through observation, the researcher paid close attention to communication among stakeholders, available documents, classroom environment, and student management. Within-case sampling was utilized as the specific type of maximum variation sampling as it allowed the researcher to see the overall interactions of people school-wide and interview with the purpose of finding answers to the research questions. Thoughtfully selecting which stakeholders to interview not only helped uncover the emerging themes, but also showed exceptions to the pattern. This type of sampling allowed the researcher not only to see

the breadth of experiences of faculty at Raptor Middle School, but also the depth of those experiences. There are no set rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry because the process is dependent on unique situational factors including when the researcher finds the answers to her questions and when the resources run out. Therefore, this data cannot be input until after the research is complete.

To ensure that all staff and parent participants shared the same understanding of the school's PBIS program, participants were given copies of the school's PBIS program outline and behavioral expectations (see Appendix F). All participants expressed knowledge of the PBIS program by signing a statement ensuring their understanding of the PBIS system in place. The researcher collected these signed statements.

The researcher presented a consent form (see Appendix) to each adult participant in the study. Participants were given time to read and review the consent form and ask the researcher questions before agreeing to participate. Participation was completely voluntary. Once a staff member or parent agreed to participate, he/she signed a consent form. Confidentiality of data was maintained by disassociating participant identity from collected data. Individual respondent names were not used in data collection. Participants were given the opportunity to review responses for statements that could potentially identify them. Although there are no known potential risks to participants as a result of participation in the study, staff respondent comments critical to administration could potentially be used in a prohibitive manner without these safeguards. Staff decision to participate was not intended to have any adverse effect on employment. The research was intended to investigate the school-wide program and identify factors related to sustainability rather than focus on individual responses.

Individual Interviews

Open-ended questions intended to encourage participant response were pre-tested on several perspective respondents and revised as necessary to ensure participant understanding. A few days prior to meeting, participants were reminded of the sessions by telephone. Written notice was provided that the sessions would be audio recorded.

A process described by McNamara (1999) was used to guide the individual interviews. In *General guidelines for conducting interviews* (1999), McNamara suggested that interviews take place in a comfortable environment, that the purpose is made clear to respondents, confidentiality terms are made clear, the format and length of interviews are explained, contact information from the researcher is supplied to the respondent, and respondents are asked if they have any questions before questions are asked. Individual interviews were conducted after school and during teacher planning periods in settings comfortable to respondents; teacher classrooms, counselor and principal offices, and conference rooms. Confidentiality and purpose of research was explained to all interviewees, who were given the opportunity to ask any questions about these issues. The researcher explained the format of guiding questions with the opportunity for open ended response and follow-up questions to probe for clarity and told the interview would take approximately one hour, depending on length of response.

All responses were recorded. Non-verbal responses and cues were recorded along with respondent answers. Sessions began with an explanation of the research by the researcher and encouragement to answer questions completely, recalling specific anecdotes and experiences that shape responses, using an interviewer script (see Appendix C). The researcher recorded notes on the themes and responses discussed in

the individual interviews in a notebook, including non-verbal response. Interviews were also audio-recorded for accuracy and later transcribed to provide the researcher later access to the data. Respondents were asked the following questions and given time to elaborate on responses and provide information on PBIS sustainability as they desired:

1. Tell me about PBIS at your school.
2. Tell me about factors you feel contribute to PBIS success. What factors hinder that success?
3. How do you think others perceive the PBIS program?
4. Tell me about the role of school leadership in the PBIS program.
5. Explain the make-up of and role of the PBIS leadership team.
6. How has PBIS affected the tone of the school in relation to teachers, parents, and students?
7. Tell me about the two way communication dynamic between PBIS leadership team and teachers and students?
8. What characteristics do you most value in the PBIS leadership team?
9. Are there outside factors such as economics, politics, power dynamics, or relationships that affect the success of the PBIS program? Please explain.
10. What suggestions do you have that could contribute to successfully maintaining and improving your PBIS program over the long term?
11. Are there any other issues or topics related to the PBIS program that you think are important and would like to discuss?

Observations

Perhaps the most important source of data collection was direct observation of both the general school environment and PBIS Leadership Team meetings. Central to the framework of symbolic interactionism in terms of this sustainability research is the notion that participants construct the meaning of program sustainability through their unique communication, experiences, and interactions. Observation is necessary to observe how these interpersonal transactions take place. The researcher observed the behavior of students and the interactions between teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators in regards to PBIS structures during routine school days. Additionally, PBIS leadership team meetings were observed in order to gather data on the communication and power dynamics of this group of teacher leaders. Of central interest to this research is the way in which relationships between people, and between people and their environment shape perceptions of program success and sustainability. By observing this team, data was gathered to provide insight into leadership and team dynamics and the values and beliefs that guide the meetings.

As explained by Rossman and Rallis (2003), field observations "take the researcher inside the setting and help the researcher discover complexity in social settings (p. 194)." In accordance with suggestions from this same research, observations in this study began with researcher notes and notations guided by a checklist or observation guide (see Appendix D). These notes focused on description of setting and participants, recording of events as they happened, reflective notes on what happened, and maps or pictures when helpful. As soon as possible once away from the school, the researcher re-wrote these field notes, organizing them into categories and adding "thick descriptions" to present details and emotions and provide context and depth to observations. In both

whole school and team meeting settings, the researcher took a non-participant observer role in the field. The primary objective was not to interact with teachers, counselors, principals, and students but rather to experience a genuine representation of their relationships, thoughts, feelings, and interactions with one another and their surroundings, particularly in relation to the PBIS program. The researcher attempted to remain as unobtrusive as possible but could not be completely covert as an obvious newcomer to the school building.

The researcher also attended each PBIS leadership team meeting held during the length of the study. The meetings were audio recorded and transcribed using the same method as with school observations. Checklists with notations were used to guide the observations, followed by re-writing of the notes to add depth and context. Team members reviewed the recorded notes before they were analyzed. Transcriptions and tapes were kept in a separate binder for each section with a carefully labeled notation of date and location.

According to Mason (2010), when using observation as a data gathering tool it is important to continue until a saturation point is reached. The researcher must always stay focused on the primary research questions and stay in the field until a point is reached when collected data becomes repetitive and stops adding valuable insights into the overall model or framework employed, which is considered saturation. Mason (2010) also explained that a researcher should continue to analyze developing themes and storylines and look for patterns to emerge, returning for as much observation time as possible, until these sessions fail to yield additional information to help develop conclusions. For the purposes of this study, every PBIS leadership team meeting was attended for the

timeframe of the research. School day observations were completed until the researcher determined that a point of saturation was reached.

Proposed Data Analysis Techniques

Rossman and Rallis' (2003) *Learning in the field: An introduction to qualitative research* served as guidance to the process of data analysis. These authors stressed the process of immersion in collected data such as transcripts and notes, organizing materials into themes and patterns, attaching meaning to the themes and patterns in order to capture the emerging narrative, and writing up results coherently. Miles and Huberman (1994) described the major phases of data analysis as data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification.

Data Reduction

Analysis of individual interview data depends on a process that is systematic and predictable. Powell and Renner (2003) recommended that researchers focus analysis by emerging themes or topics and categorize information. Using their work as a guide, interview summary sheets were used by the researcher directly following each interview. Key points and insights from researcher notes were recorded on these sheets. This allowed the researcher to record initial impressions and general main ideas from each respondent. Once interviews were transcribed from recordings, the researcher read and reviewed them thoroughly, making notes in margins as dominant ideas and themes emerged from the data sources. Next, the researcher used a "scissors-and tape method", recommended by the University of Wisconsin interview guide, in which transcript pages were cut up so each response was on a separate strip of paper. The strips were then reorganized into themes and categories. Using these strips, the researcher continued

analysis by generating a list of emergent themes and categories that held true over several individual interview sessions. These emergent themes along with the particular sessions in which they emerged were recorded in an Excel spreadsheet. Creswell (2009) recommended researchers identify five to seven emergent themes when analyzing collected data. This spreadsheet served as an organizational tool for the data, allowing the researcher to see patterns and trends, several sets of data simultaneously, and aid in the coding process. Rossman and Rallis (2003) suggested that "analysis requires the researcher approach texts with an open mind, seeking what meaning and structures emerge" (p. 184).

Notes from direct observation of Leadership team meetings and whole school observations were similarly recorded, analyzed for emergent themes and patterns, and entered into the spreadsheet. Once all meetings were transcribed, at the conclusion of the study, the researcher analyzed results using a cut and paste method for emergent themes and patterns in relation to sustainability factors. The results were matched with results from interviews. For example, if interview respondents identified the effective use of data as a contributing factor to PBIS sustainability, the researcher searched for corroborating or conflicting evidence of this factor in the PBIS Leadership Team meeting notes.

Data Display

Miles and Huberman (1994) described data display as a technique that allows a researcher to further examine data and discern patterns and relationships that may have not emerged from the initial process of data reduction. It is a visual tool that helps arrange data and allows the researcher to better understand and make connections from

the textual data. In order to potentially discover further themes, the researcher created a series of charts to map out supporting evidence, and themes from the variety of data sources. These charts allowed the researcher to easily have a visual representation of the emerging patterns and themes and make connections across data sources.

Conclusion Drawing and Verification

This final element to data analysis, according to Miles and Huberman (1994), involves the researcher stepping away from the work to consider implicit meanings embedded in the data and to assess implications of the emerging themes and storylines. In order for the researcher to be confident in the findings of this study, she reviewed the data multiple times to ensure with as much certainty as possible that the data was credible and that the explanation of PBIS sustainability was accurately represented.

Methods for Promoting Trustworthiness

According to Creswell (2009), "Qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of findings by employing certain procedures, while qualitative reliability indicates that the researcher's approach is consistent" (p. 190). Creswell (2009) also discussed four factors in the "trustworthiness" of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Rossman and Rallis (2003) gave definitions and questions to ask when discussing these factors. Credibility is truth value. Questions to ask include "Does the research derive from participant views? Does the researcher reflect on her role?" (p. 66). Transferability is the ability of the research to find applicability to other situations. Dependability is the presence of a consistent, transparent, logical and carefully documented research process. Confirmability is

objectivity or neutrality. Does the research provide detail on the data and thought processes that led to the conclusions? (Rossman and Rallis, 2003).

In this study, one threat to credibility is potential researcher bias. I have been a school-based administrator in several schools that have utilized PBIS programs effectively and have witnessed the success of the model. Another threat to credibility is that interview participant feelings about PBIS sustainability are not accurately recorded or that intended participant response is not expressed fully. There is also the potential that a lack of data leads to a credibility issue; that data collection does not reach a point of saturation where the concept of PBIS sustainability at Raptor Middle School is fully explored. Researcher observation, another method used in data collection, includes the potential threat that people act differently when they know they are being observed.

Several strategies and procedures were put in place to address these potential threats. I have been reflective and open about my professional experiences and relationship with PBIS programs, acknowledging my potential bias and connection to the research. Member checking was employed by allowing participants to review transcripts before analysis to be sure their intended notions were represented with accuracy and again at the conclusion of the study once findings were complete. Also, transcripts were checked against tapes and participant recall to ensure no obvious mistakes were made. An external auditor was also used to review the analyzed data to look for potential inconsistencies and errors. Triangulation of sources and method triangulation were established by collecting data from various sources including individual interviews, observation, and the study of material records in order to build a more complete picture

of the PBIS sustainability model. Purposeful random sampling, as found in the selection of interview respondents, is also a tool for increasing credibility.

The primary threat to transferability is the case study design in which one middle school is used for research. The primary strategy put in place to address this issue includes the use of thick, rich description to convey findings. Creswell (2009) suggested "description may transport readers to the setting and give the discussion an element of shared experiences. This procedure can add to the validity of the findings" (p. 192). Still, this transferability threat remains a primary limitation of the research and results cannot be used to generalize to other settings.

Dependability threats inherent to this research include the possibility that results of the research and description of the process are incoherent, confusing, or unable to be trusted for replication. Using documentation of my process, would another researcher be able to expect to make similar conclusions under similar circumstances? In order to address these threats, a detailed description of the process has been included in the methodology. Also, prolonged engagement was spent by the researcher in the natural setting of Raptor Middle School and among participants including full day school environment observations and leadership team meeting attendance. Method triangulation and source triangulation were other sources of protection against dependability threats (Creswell, 2009).

Threats to confirmability include a lack of clarity in the research design or possible confusion as to the thought processes that led to decision making throughout the research. A rich, detailed description of research processes and both method

triangulation and triangulation of sources are the primary checks against this threat (Rossman and Rallis, 2003).

Overall, in this study, the following trustworthiness procedures were put in place:

1. Transcripts were checked against tapes to ensure no obvious mistakes were made.
2. Member checking was employed by allowing participants to review transcripts before analysis to be sure their intended notions were represented with accuracy.
3. Member checking was employed by allowing participants to contribute to initial analysis of themes and issues identified in interview sessions to be sure respondents agree with accuracy of initial findings. Respondents were also given opportunity to review the completed study for accuracy.
4. The use of external auditor for fact checking.
5. Method triangulation is included in the design as information is gathered from a variety of sources including interviews, and observation.
6. Triangulation of sources including several interview respondents and leadership team members.
7. Prolonged time was spent by the researcher in the natural setting of Raptor Middle School and among participants including full day school environment observations and leadership team meeting attendance.
8. Negative or discrepant results are reported in study findings, including the possibility that the majority of study participants do not think PBIS is effectively sustained at the school.
9. Dense description of study procedures, logic, and findings are included.

Limitations and Delimitations

As with all research, there are limitations and potential weaknesses in this design. This single school case study design intentionally utilized a small sample in order to fully examine the ways in which perceptions, values and beliefs contribute to PBIS sustainability. Therefore, results cannot be generalized to a larger sample or a different context. The study sample included one middle school in Western North Carolina. The results cannot be generalized to elementary or high schools or schools outside of this region.

Also, the study design included the use of interviews and observations in order to gather data specific to individual beliefs and perceptions. Potential limitations to interviewing methodology include poor question choice, response bias, and incomplete recollection of participants. Respondents responded to questions that asked them to reflect over a period of 6 years. Responses relied on respondent memory. Therefore responses could be incorrect at times, reflect bias, or forget details from the period. Additionally, individual interview respondents were selected from specific constituent groups and chosen randomly in cases of multiple volunteers. It is possible that the views and opinions of those who did not choose to participate would differ from those who were included. In that case collected data could be under-representative of the whole school staff population. Limitations are also inherent to the use of observations in data collection. Observations can be biased if people behave differently because they know they are being observed.

Another limitation is the possibility of researcher bias. Due to personal experience I strongly believe that, if implemented appropriately, PBIS is an effective behavior management program in middle school. In order to overcome researcher bias,

multiple forms of data analysis was incorporated so as to give the researcher a clear picture of emerging themes minus personal opinion of the program itself. Due to the nature of the study and the dependence upon personal perception and reflection, these limitations were difficult to address. However, the large number of participants involved in this qualitative study was intended to account for as much discrepancy as possible.

Conclusion

A qualitative case study design employing multiple data collection strategies was used to closely examine factors leading to PBIS sustainability at Raptor Middle School. Individual interviews and direct researcher observation were used to accomplish method triangulation and produce replicable findings. Study participants were given multiple opportunities to review transcripts for accuracy. They were able to review transcribed interviews shortly after the interview was completed, again once the initial emergent themes were identified, and once the study was complete. Collected data was analyzed using a cut and paste method in which emergent themes and concepts from data collection were gathered and sorted. The researcher used a visual representation to diagram emerging themes, patterns, and concept relationships. The data was then entered into a spreadsheet to make it easier to interpret and organize. This methodology was designed to ensure that emergent themes relating to the sustainability of PBIS were accurately recorded and analyzed.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS

The purpose of this study is to explore PBIS sustainability. Creswell (2009) suggested that although research methods within the qualitative paradigm exhibit similarities in terms of data collection and analysis, the way that the findings are reported is diverse. One characteristic common to qualitative reports is that results are presented in descriptive, narrative forms rather than as a scientific report. This study intends to provide a rich description constructed from the participant interviews and researcher observations in order to present a holistic construction of the beliefs, values, perceptions, and meanings that stakeholders attach to the school's PBIS program and its sustainability, while also considering the role of power in this process.

Boonstra and Gravenhorst (1998, p. 99) define power as "a dynamic social process affecting opinions, emotions, and behavior of interest groups in which inequalities are involved with respect to the realization of wishes and interests." In a school setting, where teachers, counselors, students, administrators, parents and others are in continuous interaction with one another, sometimes displays of power are obvious and sometimes they go unnoticed. Through the lens of symbolic interactionism, power dynamics can be used as a way to confirm certain beliefs, values, and perceptions among others. To fulfill the purpose of this study, interviews and observations were completed in order to address the following research questions:

1. What are stakeholder meanings, values, and beliefs in relation to the PBIS program in the case study middle school?
2. What interactions and processes are used to construct sustainability within the case?

3. What power dynamics are present in the school?

4. How are power dynamics negotiated between administrators and teachers, specifically in relation to the PBIS program?

5. How are power dynamics, specifically in relation to the PBIS program, negotiated among teachers?

6. What are the key factors that contribute to successful sustainability of PBIS?

Demographics

This study was conducted at Raptor Middle School (pseudonym), located in a rural school district in North Carolina. Raptor Middle School serves grades six through eight and current enrollment is 906 students. According to the NC Report Card (www.ncreportcard.org) and principal-provided data, 88% of students are White, 8% Hispanic, 2% multi-racial, 1% African-American and 1% multi-racial. Forty two percent qualify for free or reduced lunch. Fourteen percent are identified as Exceptional Children (EC) and have active goals on Individual Education Plans (IEP). An additional twenty percent are identified as Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG). Three percent of students are identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP).

Raptor Middle School was most recently designated as a NC School of Distinction, meaning at least eighty percent of students met expected growth on state standardized tests. In the district, 100% of schools met that designation while only 31% of schools in the state were so designated. NC Report Card data show that the average class size at Raptor Middle School is larger than that of the district or the state. Sixth grade at Raptor Middle School averages twenty-seven students per class, while the district average is twenty-five and the state average is twenty-two. Seventh grade at

Raptor Middle School averages twenty-five students per class, higher than the district average of twenty-four and the state average of twenty-two. Eighth grade at Raptor Middle School averages twenty-five students per class while the district average is twenty-four and the state average is twenty-one. See Table 5 below.

Table 5

Average Class Size

	Raptor Middle	District	North Carolina
6th grade	27	25	22
7th grade	25	24	22
8th grade	25	24	21

The administrative team consists of a principal and two assistant principals. The student services department includes two counselors. The media center has a certified media coordinator and an assistant. There are fifty-seven full time certified teachers as well as four non-certified instructional staff members. The staff turnover rate is four percent at Raptor Middle school, much lower than the district average of 10% or the state average of 14%. Thirty percent of certified staff have obtained advanced degrees and twenty-three have obtained National Board Certification. Over 50% have over ten years experience, 32% have four to ten years experience and 18% have less than three years.

PBIS at Raptor Middle School

Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) is a school management structure defined by Warren et al. (2006) as a "prevention minded approach to student discipline that is characterized by its focus on defining and teaching behavior

expectations, rewarding appropriate behaviors, continual evaluation of its effectiveness, and the integration of supports for individuals, groups, and the school as a whole" (p.188). Lewis et al. (2002) explained that PBIS develops a school-wide system with clear behavioral expectations in the classroom and in common areas such as cafeteria, hallway, bus parking lot, playground, etc. Several researchers including Sherrod et al. (2009) and Medley et al. (2007) described PBIS as a proactive strategy designed to address problem behaviors in many school settings and suggest the program as a positive alternative to a punitive approach.

According to the North Carolina statewide PBIS evaluation report written by Irwin and Algozzine (2007), the Department of Instruction created a Positive Behavioral Support center in 2000 with the goal of establishing PBIS in all schools throughout the state by the 2013-2014 school year. This goal was in response to IDEA funding provided to support the North Carolina State Improvement Program. General Statute 115c-105.47 required local boards of education to develop safe school plans designed to ensure safe, secure, orderly schools. Recognizing PBIS as a state-supported, data-driven, thoroughly researched program with success in reducing suspension and referral rates, districts and schools began exploring implementation around this time. Raptor Middle School was charged by district leadership to begin the process of PBIS implementation in 2006.

Within the framework of PBIS, each school creates its own expectations. Raptor Middle School's school-wide PBIS program specifies acceptable student behaviors within the categories of Responsibility, Manners, and Spirit. As stated in the Raptor Middle student handbook, "The PBIS model in our school is simple and uniform. Keeping the environment positive improves time management. We believe the keys to

successful behavioral management are consistency and positive interactions." The school's behavior plan clearly outlines expectations throughout different school locations and contexts of the school day including hallway, cafeteria, assembly, bathroom, bus, car rider line, and use of technology. The PBIS plan utilizes a token or coin system to reward positive behaviors on a daily basis. Teachers give tokens when they observe positive behaviors. Students with these tokens receive rewards such as preferential seating in the cafeteria, the freedom to leave two minutes early at dismissal, and the privilege of purchasing items at a school store with the tokens. Several times during the year, the school holds random drawings for larger prizes for students who have received tokens during the specified time. Teachers sign their names to tokens when they give them to students. On a weekly basis, in order to encourage teacher participation in the rewards program, teacher names are also drawn from among those who gave out tokens. Teachers receive gift cards when their names are drawn.

During the time when this data was collected, Raptor Middle School was experimenting with other reward systems, such as those that could be used to reward those students who consistently make positive contributions to the school environment. The school decided to implement a long-term reward strategy, the AAA card. Students receive AAA cards after report cards are released at nine week intervals. As noted in detail earlier on p. 60, to earn the AAA card students must receive points in three categories: academics, attitude, and attendance. They obtain points for making good grades, behaving appropriately, and for having fewer than 3 absences during the nine weeks. They must receive at least 6 points and at least one point must come from each of the three categories.

Raptor Middle School first implemented its PBIS program in 2007. The first year of implementation saw a reduction in student disciplinary referrals and out of school suspension (OSS) days assigned. In the three years following, both recorded referrals and assigned OSS days have remained steadily below the numbers found previous to implementation. School Wide Evaluation Tool (SET) evaluation scores have also stayed steadily above the acceptable 80% mark.

Back in Control at Raptor Middle School

Back in Control (BIC) procedures are used at Raptor Middle School for dealing with classroom disruptions. This set of guidelines is distinct yet related to the PBIS reward structure. The Raptor Middle School 2013-2014 handbook outlines guidelines for student behavior issues and interventions, which are divided into three levels. Level III behaviors include serious infractions such as fighting, possession of drugs or alcohol or weapons, and bullying. These behaviors result in an immediate referral to the administration for disciplinary consequences such as in-school and out-of-school suspension. Level I behaviors are the most minor and include chewing gum, arriving to class unprepared, and missing homework. Interventions for these behaviors are at a classroom level and include teacher conferences with students and teacher contacts to parents.

While Level III referrals are turned directly over to administration and Level I behaviors are dealt with through classroom teacher interventions, Level II behaviors and interventions directly relate to BIC procedures. Level II infractions, as defined in the student handbook, include “those that interfere with or disrupt the environment, teaching, and/or learning process” and can include tardies, disrespect, classroom disruption,

excessive talking and inappropriate language. There are clear school-wide intervention steps for Level II behaviors. The steps are as follows:

1. Verbal Warning
2. Lunch Detention
3. Back in Control 1 (with parent phone call)
4. Back in Control 2 (parent phone call and afterschool detention)
5. Back in Control 3 (parent phone call and office referral)

When students are sent to the school's BIC room, they are asked to reflect on their behavior and school expectations. According to the RMS handbook, the purpose of BIC is to:

> assist teachers with classroom disruptions that interfere with or disrupt teaching. BIC allows a student to immediately refocus and to think about his/her behavior before it escalates. The interventions are immediate and they increase in levels during the week. Each week students are given the chance to start over. (p. 7)

Again, there is a clear process once students are sent to the BIC room. The steps are as follows:

1. Student enters the BIC room with an agenda and shows the referral to BIC teacher.
2. The BIC teacher calls home to communicate about behavior and consequences. Student speaks to parents.
3. The student completes an assigned BIC activity and completes academic work if applicable.
4. Student is sent back to class with a pass.

Data Collection

In this chapter I will describe the dominant themes that emerged from analyzing data generated from observations and interviews. Ten observations were completed totaling more than 40 hours, including four whole school observations, three PBIS team meeting observations, two staff PLC meeting observations, and one staff development observation. Seventeen in-depth interviews were conducted. These included two interviews with school administrators, four interviews with members of the PBIS leadership team, two parent interviews, and interviews with representatives from all grade levels, a cross-section of subject areas including elective classes, media center, and specialists.

Respondents were assigned codes to assist the researcher in data analysis. Two administrator respondents were coded A1 and A2. Two parents were coded P1 and P2. Four teachers who were part of the PBIS team were coded C1 through C4. Other teacher respondents were coded T1 through T9. Demographics on interview respondents are included in Table 6 below.

Table 6

Respondent Profiles

Position	PBIS Team Member?	Years Experience	Years at Raptor Middle	Education Level	Gender
A1		31	3	MA	M
C1	Yes	11	11	BA	F
T1		4	4	BA	F
A2	Yes	13	7	MA	M
C2	Yes	25	10	MA	F
C3	Yes	12	7	BA	F
T2		12	12	MA	F
T3		15	8	EdD	F
T4		11	11	BA	F
T5		8	3	BA	M
P1		N/A	N/A	MA	F
P2		N/A	N/A	EdS	M
T6		16	16	BA	M
T7		20	14	MA	F
T8		24	10	MA	F
T9		18	4	BA	F
C4	Yes	7	1	BA	M

Interviews

In *General Guidelines for Conducting Interviews* (1999), McNamara suggested that interviews take place in a comfortable environment, that the purpose is made clear to respondents, confidentiality terms are made clear, the format and length of interviews are explained, contact information from the researcher is supplied to the respondent, and respondents are asked if they have any questions before interviews begin. Individual interviews were conducted after school and during teacher planning periods in settings comfortable to respondents such as teacher classrooms, counselor and principal offices, and conference rooms. Confidentiality and purpose of research were explained to all interviewees, who were given the opportunity to ask any questions about these issues.

The researcher explained the format of guiding questions with the opportunity for open ended responses and follow-up questions to probe for clarity. Respondents were told the interview would take approximately forty-five to sixty minutes, depending on length of response.

Interview sessions began with an explanation of the research by the researcher and encouragement to answer questions completely, recalling specific anecdotes and experiences that shape responses, using interview protocol (see Appendix C). Non-verbal responses and cues were noted in notes along with respondent answers. Interviews were also audio-recorded for accuracy and later transcribed by the researcher. Respondents were asked the following questions and given time to elaborate on responses and provide information on PBIS sustainability as they desired:

1. Tell me about PBIS at your school.
2. Tell me about factors you feel contribute to PBIS success. What factors hinder that success?
3. How do you think others perceive the PBIS program?
4. Tell me about the role of school leadership in the PBIS program.
5. Explain the make-up of and role of the PBIS leadership team.
6. How has PBIS affected the tone of the school in relation to teachers, parents, and students?
7. Tell me about the two way communication dynamic between PBIS leadership team and teachers and students?
8. What characteristics do you most value in the PBIS leadership team?

9. Are there outside factors such as economics, politics, power dynamics, or relationships that affect the success of the PBIS program? Please explain.
10. What suggestions do you have that could contribute to successfully maintaining and improving your PBIS program over the long term?
11. Are there any other issues or topics related to the PBIS program that you think are important and would like to discuss?

Observations

As explained by Rossman and Rallis (2003), field observations "take the researcher inside the setting and help the researcher discover complexity in social settings (p. 194)." In accordance with suggestions from Rossman and Rallis, observations in this study began with researcher notes and notations guided by an observation guide (see Appendix D). These notes focused on description of setting and participants, recording of events as they happened, reflective notes on what happened, and maps or pictures when helpful. After initially collecting observational data, the researcher re-wrote these field notes, organizing them into categories and adding "thick descriptions" to present details and provide context and depth to observations. The researcher took a non-participant observer role in the field. The objective was not to interact with teachers, counselors, principals, and students, but rather to experience a genuine representation of their relationships, thoughts, feelings, and interactions with one another and their surroundings, particularly in relation to the PBIS program. The researcher attempted to remain as unobtrusive as possible but could not be completely covert as she was obviously a visitor to the school building.

PBIS team meetings, staff meetings, and professional development sessions were described with notes taken on observation forms. Professional development was video recorded and watched to develop thorough notes. Observation sheets were used to guide the observations, followed by re-writing of the notes to add depth and context. Team members reviewed the written notes before they were analyzed.

Analysis

Through a process of data analysis, five dominant themes emerged. The researcher transcribed all interviews individually in order to have another opportunity to hear teacher voice and familiarize herself with the data. Comprehensive analysis of all transcribed interviews and observations led to sorting and coding categories using a color-coding method. Repetitive examination of data extracted patterns, categories, and subcategories, which were continually merged and revised and recorded in a spreadsheet (see Appendix E). Charts were created from transcribed interviews and observations, and then compared to color-coded interview transcriptions and observation guide sheets. This process allowed further examination of the data to ensure appropriate emergence of themes. As patterns emerged, five themes were determined:

1. School culture.
2. Teacher buy-in.
3. Teacher voice.
4. Commitment, collaboration, and communication.
5. PBIS efficacy.

Recurring Themes

School Culture

According to Lewis et al. (2002), a successful PBIS program includes interventions, supports, and positive reinforcement provided in all areas based on the school's and each child's specific needs. Sustainability hinges on the match between what a program offers and the stakeholder perceptions of what a school needs. PBIS at Raptor Middle School struggled to identify and meet specific school needs at its implementation and continues to wrestle with this issue almost seven years later.

Throughout the interview process, teachers and parents clearly expressed questions about the need for a behavior management program at Raptor Middle. They detailed the school as one filled with middle class students who exhibit minimal behavioral issues. There was confusion as to why a program like PBIS was needed. One respondent parent discussed the issue, expressing some surprise that the school needed a behavior management program, and yet confirming that he knew about the program. "They are known for having a strong program but I don't know anything else about it. I know they are a very homogeneous school and they don't have many big discipline issues." (P2)

Members of the PBIS team also acknowledged that program does not always seem to make sense based on school needs. "The thing is, this school is different from my last one. They don't have big problems. The biggest things teachers complain about are stuff like tardies to class, kids not trying their hardest in class, not walking on the right side of the hall. Stuff like that. At my last school you almost had to entertain kids to get through to them. Here they all come to class with notebooks out ready to listen to you. I can sit back and just teach. You don't have kids throwing desks or breaking

windows or fighting. It's amazing." (C4) This respondent was new to the school, having previously taught at a school with more striking behavior management issues.

Committee member C2 said, "Our school is a pretty chill kind of place to begin with. As far as our kids, they are kind of even keel. I worked at Eckerd camp for 13 years, so when I came here, I was like 'Wow! So this is how the rest of the world lives.' So my perspective is always skewed. I think it was a pretty positive place before, you know just to be honest." Similar to C4, this committee member also had experience in an environment with serious student behavior needs and expressed concerns about how PBIS fit into Raptor school culture.

Reflecting on the summer PBIS team meeting, another team member said, "We talked a lot about tardies that day this summer. That's one of our biggest problems, along with homework and attendance. PBIS doesn't really cover that." This comment evidenced the mismatch between school needs and the overarching goals of the RMS program.

Recalling the initial implementation of the program, one administrator (A2) remembered, "Teachers wanted to tackle problems like students not turning in homework. I would notice the same students sitting in silent lunch for days and sometimes weeks at a time and I would ask why they had silent lunch and they would tell me they didn't turn in their homework. I started talking to teachers about how they could use other interventions for little things like homework. A lot of people dropped out of the PBIS team when they saw it was about more than just disciplining students for things like that." Instead of matching the program to meet school needs, the infant team awkwardly tried to fit what they understood about PBIS into the Raptor Middle School culture.

Interviews with non-committee members revealed similar concerns. One teacher expressed knowledge of PBIS and wondered aloud about the need for the program at this school. "I know there is PBIS research out there and I just wonder about our school clientele. It's a pretty good school. And I think other schools that really like PBIS have a different population than we do. I think maybe that's why everyone didn't immediately buy into it, because the need wasn't there. But like my girlfriend in Buffalo and my girlfriend in Colorado are both working in inner city schools. They have it and they love it. They really love it. And so I think some teachers here may be like, 'If I'm not having any problems in class, why do I need it?" (T3)

This perception of PBIS as an unnecessary program clearly hurt teacher buy-in at implementation. "When if first got started, it seemed like it was designed for the few teachers who weren't handling behavior well and then everyone had to comply even though we all didn't need the system. It wasn't like a bunch of teachers got together and said, 'Hey, this is a problem and we need to fix it.'" (T8) The initiative was viewed as top-heavy and not teacher led.

Although the issues with school's PBIS program led to negative perceptions at implementation, one teacher acknowledged changing beliefs. "I think teachers see it as a work in progress. I think more and more people are starting to see the need for the program. Once you get those discipline reports, you can identify the frequent flyers that are getting in trouble over and over. I'm starting to think that now that we're seeing those same students, we have to find strategies to help them. We're going towards that." (T7) Although over time the program has gained acceptance among many teachers, perceptions from those interviewed revealed that overall, teachers, parents, and

administrators acknowledge that this population does not exhibit an abundance of serious or dangerous misbehaviors or infractions.

Researcher observations also revealed that Raptor Middle is a school without major student discipline issues. Although middle schools can be loud and chaotic places, several visits to Raptor displayed a school that was quiet and calm. During class, the halls were virtually empty. During class changes, when several hundred students were moving, there were no behavioral issues. This was extremely impressive as there was little or no adult supervision in any of the class changes observed. When met by random students while classes were in session, the observer was greeted politely. The cafeteria was small and crowded for a school the size of Raptor Middle. However, during lunch the crowd of students reacted instantly to the sound of the announcement buzzer. As soon as the buzzer was heard, all students got silent and put their hand up until an announcement was made. This happened several times throughout the observations and every time the student response was the same. The needs for PBIS at Raptor Middle are seemingly different than at many other middle schools.

A factor initially hurting the success and sustainability of PBIS at Raptor Middle is that is was never truly molded to fit the needs of the school. Sustainability and teacher buy-in would directly benefit from a program better focused on school priorities for behavior management by tackling issues such as incomplete homework, paying better attention in class, tardies, and attendance. According to interview and observational data, these are the needs of Raptor Middle School, not the disruptive and serious behaviors that PBIS was initially focused on. Since implementation, the program has evolved and is beginning to take shape into something better suited for the needs of Raptor Middle

School. This improvement has been slow and is still a work in progress. The better fit of PBIS to Raptor Middle has been made possible in part through an emergence of teacher voice and increased teacher leadership, both of which have helped improve teacher buy-in.

Teacher Buy-In

Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) explained that promoting teacher leadership is a crucial step in sustaining school initiatives and garnering teacher support. They explained that this leadership depends on the development of a capacity for decision making. Ultimately, program success depends on teachers acting as leaders and decision makers. Without this, buy-in suffers and initiatives do not grow in meaningful, positive ways; they do not sustain.

Developing teachers into leaders improves the likelihood of program sustainability as it increases buy-in from stakeholders. Teachers respect other teachers and they work to exceed the expectations set by their colleagues. When teacher leaders believe in a program and share that program in a professional manner, others contribute to making the program meaningful and therefore successful. A successful program is one that is worth sustaining. However, before this can happen, a solid foundation must be built. This foundation begins with staff buy-in. The PBIS program at Raptor Middle was implemented without this crucial foundation. As such, implementation was less than ideal. Since that time, both the PBIS team and the administrative team have realized this shortcoming and are putting much effort into remedying the situation. They are growing staff buy-in in an effort to support and continue sustainability.

As previously mentioned, PBIS was a state directed initiative. All school systems were required to begin the implementation process of PBIS in individual schools during the early and mid 2000's as all schools in the state were to be PBIS schools by the 2013-2014 school year. Raptor Middle School was chosen to begin this initiative in the 2006 school year. At this same time, there was an assistant principal opening at Raptor Middle. The district decided this would be a great time to hire someone who had experience with PBIS and so the new assistant principal came to Raptor Middle with PBIS as his main objective. As the assistant principal remembered in his interview, "The teacher hiring committee, I think, really liked that I had experience with PBIS and that's a big reason why they brought me in." (A2)

Other teachers had similar recollections of the relationship between PBIS implementation and the newly hired administrator. One teacher said, "The PBIS program came from the assistant principal. When he came for his job interview, he brought his notebook where they had implemented it at his school. So it was his baby, kind of like his project out of the gate." (T6) This same idea was expressed by T8. "It almost seemed like PBIS was one person's baby in that we were going to do it no matter what. We were given the impression that we were going to do it whether we wanted to or believed in it or not." Buy-in to the program was immediately weakened by perceptions that this was not a teacher-led initiative. Teachers were given no background information on the program from the start. As described by many, it was just short of a disaster.

Many teachers expressed similar feelings about the implementation of PBIS. One teacher said, "I think we definitely had a shaky beginning to PBIS. I think we were reluctant because a lot of us thought that it was maybe an elementary school model that

was being brought up to the middle school. At first it was like, 'Oh, we're just going to give it a trial run.' And the second year, 'Oh, we're just working on it a little more.' It was just something we were told to do." (T7) Another teacher used similarly strong language when she expressed, "It really came down heavily from administration. It was top down which also makes it something hard for teachers to buy-in to." (T8) Buy-in suffered and teachers remember associating PBIS as a top heavy initiative pushed by the administration and district without consideration of teacher input.

A PBIS team member also discussed the initial problems with teacher buy-in during the early years of the program. "I think year one and year two teachers just saw it as another thing to do, and they did not; maybe even year three, they did not understand how it was going to help the overall school. There were a lot of negative comments." (C2) Negative associations with the program resulted when teacher buy-in was not prioritized in implementation. Teachers want to know that what they are doing is meaningful and they want their input to be valued. At Raptor Middle, they didn't understand how or why PBIS was being introduced and they resented not being involved in the implementation process.

As if the uncertainty and the anger over PBIS implementation wasn't enough, the BIC process (procedure for dealing with classroom disruptions as previously described) was introduced simultaneously and was immediately confused with PBIS. One PBIS team member explained the confusion between the two programs. "The original launch of PBIS was put in at the same time as the launch of a new consequence program, BIC. And people began to associate PBIS with consequences and not rewards. That caused resentment because they had so many issues with BIC. So they transferred that

resentment onto PBIS. And we've been battling it and battling it. Some teachers are lingering on with that and they're holding on to some of that resentment." (C2)

Interview responses detailed the confusion that still lies between the two programs, which exist as similar yet distinct. When T5 was asked to share his knowledge about the PBIS program at Raptor Middle, he responded with a question, "Do you want to know about the Back in Control, or what exactly?" Obviously, there was still some confusion between PBIS and BIC.

T9 was also slightly uncertain about the differences between the two programs as she stated in response to what she liked about PBIS, "Teachers can look in their agenda and see if a student has been in trouble that day or that week so they know what step they should take next." Consequences and punishment were part of BIC, not PBIS. Introducing the two programs together has created a perception, and thus a reality, that they are one and the same. Staff buy-in was definitely hindered by the confusion generated by simultaneously adopting PBIS and BIC.

Though all acknowledge the flawed implementation process, it was not intended to be done without staff buy-in. The assistant principal was new to the school and he tried to invite as many people as possible to join the PBIS team. In the beginning, he didn't realize that people didn't know the basics of PBIS. He shared, "At first everyone loved the idea of implementing PBIS and lots of folks wanted to join the team. They saw it mainly as a discipline tool…We made some mistakes though. A lot of people dropped off the team when they saw what it was really about. We didn't have a great process then to implement new programs. The principal at the time asked me to run with it and I did.

I would implement it differently now, using the School Improvement Team, in order to get staff buy-in from the start."

Perceptions of PBIS as administratively forced with little recognition of the need for teacher support were expressed consistently throughout the interview process. T4 said "We tried to get other people on (the PBIS team) besides just the one representative that agreed to be a part of the team because PBIS can be the hardest initiative to buy-in to. Definitely if there were more teachers coming back and sharing successes and that sort of thing, it would be an easier program to support." This teacher acknowledged the difficulty in garnering teacher buy-in to PBIS.

Another teacher reflected on how implementation could have been more successful. "Before launching a new idea or new program, getting our feedback and letting us tell them what we think will or will not work about the program. And, making sure that at all times there is some way we can put our own individual part to it, because that to me is the only way that teachers are going to buy-in. It needs to work for them." (T8) Teacher opinions and values were not consistently sought in the implementation, which clearly took away from program success.

PBIS team members expressed similar concerns about a program launched without strong teacher support. C2 added, "I don't think the launch was done as well as it should have been and we've all realized that." That seemed to be the sentiment of everyone interviewed.

Teachers saw the program as a pet project of a new administrator with little relation to school or classroom needs. They felt powerless as they had no input into whether or not they implemented PBIS. Some teachers saw PBIS as an intrusion of their

classroom discipline plans without value to improved student learning. PBIS and BIC were and still are universally confused. The initiative was viewed as top heavy and buy-in was low. The PBIS program was not implemented with consideration to teacher input or with a component of developing teacher leadership in the plan. All these components created an extreme lack of teacher buy-in. However, Raptor Middle was dedicated to the program and to generating that much needed staff support. A new principal was hired a couple of years after PBIS implementation. He valued a solid foundation. "I think that's (teacher buy-in) a big part of having a successful program. That's what you've got to do. It's like anything else, you build it from a solid foundation." The PBIS team listened. They created ways to increase staff participation and buy-in to the program. They began seeking and listening to teacher voice.

Teacher Voice

School decision making and improved student learning depend on teacher leadership and a developed teacher voice (Fullan, 2001). Recognizing and cultivating teacher voice and teacher leadership is also important to building a collaborative school culture that fosters shared goals and ultimately has a positive impact on student success. Student success is the priority of educators.

Seven years after a flawed implementation, the PBIS program plays an important role in the climate of Raptor Middle School, as evidenced by prominent postings throughout the school, the student handbook, and common teacher references with students to the PBIS expectations around the school. Perceptions of the leadership and driving force behind the success of PBIS have improved over the last few years. Most teachers interviewed no longer identify the program as solely an administrative initiative

and instead identify teacher leaders on the PBIS team as the face of the program. In general, teachers now recognize PBIS as a valued aspect of school life at Raptor Middle School.

This positive perception and the emergence of teacher voice have been essential to the sustainability of PBIS as teachers will not support a program that they are unable to own. Several PBIS team committee members discussed the ability to be heard, particularly in terms of the representative nature of the team. For example, CI stated that "At first, I think, staff saw the PBIS committee as having a 'closed door' policy. In the first year or two of the program we had to consciously make efforts to open up the doors to meetings and open up channels of communication. Now I think everyone knows there is an open invitation for anyone to attend any meeting and contribute as necessary."

Another committee member, (C2), echoed this opinion. In her interview, she said, "Teachers all have a voice now. I mean, Ms. Wilson spearheads things and pulls it together usually. But if people want their voice to be heard, their voice can be heard." This is a clear statement that voice is important and voice is emerging through the committee and its leaders.

Interestingly, other non-committee teachers also recognized the PBIS team structure as important to the emergence of voice. "I think what I see at our school is that the leaders of our school, it's their job to listen to the PBIS committee and the PBIS committee is trying to get feedback from the teachers. The PBIS committee gives feedback to school administration…. I feel like they are listening and as things need to be changed based on the needs for a certain population, the team and administration are listening and making those changes as necessary." (T7) This commitment to listening

and providing feedback back and forth from teachers to principals is important to the emerging teacher voice.

Many teachers also talked about the ability to give suggestions to their PBIS representative and have their ideas discussed at team meetings. "Our representative is really good about taking our complaints, or our suggestions or ideas, about taking that to the committee." She gave an example of a difference in how her grade level wanted to give student rewards. She concluded that "Our representative addressed the team with that and we got that changed." (T6) The capacity of the team to take suggestions and process feedback has worked to change teacher perception of the program.

Another teacher focused on how the PBIS team listens and is able to adapt to changes based on feedback. "I appreciate their dedication to it (PBIS) and I feel like they are looking at all angles and they are listening to the feedback that they are getting. So I think they are hearing what people are saying. If there are any changes that need to be made, they are hearing that and they are trying to adapt." (T2) Again, response to teacher voice has helped change beliefs about PBIS.

As well as providing a sounding board for teachers, the committee is also open to new members. This contributed to the perception that voice is an important component of the decision making process. "If anyone has concerns or suggestions, they can email or talk to any member of the team. They are always open to that. Anyone can serve on the committee. They're always very free about that anyone can be on the committee." (T9) The PBIS team is open, an important attribute in attracting teacher buy-in.

Committee members also recognized that meetings are an open forum for discussion, without power struggles or pressures to stifle opinions. "Everybody feels like

they have a say. I don't think anybody walks away thinking they didn't get a chance to have their opinion heard." (C3) Even the two resistors to PBIS admitted that teacher voice is sought and heard throughout the program. The team values input from a variety of teachers and team representatives.

Finally, the administration pointed to the team as important in the process of building the capacity for teacher leadership and voice. Both the principal and assistant principal acknowledged the team as key to the PBIS program's direction. "At first I led the team and guided the chair to decisions, encouraged her on issues to consider. Now, I've backed off completely. Now it's a truly teacher led committee and program." (A2) "You listen. You just listen. It's about sitting down and having conversations with one another." (A1) Teacher voice was not asked for during the implementation years of PBIS. That has changed. As a result, not only has the program improved, but teachers have truly developed into teacher leaders. Within their leadership positions, they have sought and continue to seek input from all. This emergence of teacher voice has helped transform PBIS from something unnecessary and force fed from administration, to a program that positively reflects the needs of Raptor Middle School.

Observations of team meetings also yielded data to support the notion of the emergence of teacher voice as a key to program sustainability. Decision-making within the PBIS team structure depended on issues and concerns brought from the staff to the team. The team consistently considered staff perception and how ideas might be received.

For example, one aspect of the program that remains a point of contention among staff is in the rewards system. Opening up the process so that teachers have a voice in

decisions regarding which rewards work best as motivators for their students has been an area the PBIS team has given much consideration. As the 8th grade team representative explained, "Our biggest weakness is the positive reward system. We have problems figuring out how to reward for the expectations, in regards to students at all grade levels. An 8th grader is different from a 6th grader. This year I'm excited we're trying something new. It's really been a point of concern. I think it will help 8th grade teachers buy-in to the level other teachers have. Without buy-in, it's not going to work." She appreciated that the team was differentiating based on a voiced need.

Data collected from PBIS team meeting observations showed that when making decisions about student rewards, teacher voice was a primary concern. At a fall meeting, one team member expressed that the teachers she represented did not feel like they were being treated professionally as they felt voiceless in the student reward process. The team held a 45 minute conversation about two opposing values; the need for consistency in the school-wide PBIS program versus the need to listen to teachers as professionals with valued opinions about how to best motivate the students they know best. Eventually the team compromised on a plan to pilot an award system with 8th grade and not force the change on all teachers. The new plan allows 6th and 7th grade teachers to keep the school store token system they value and trust, while allowing the 8th grade to resolve an issue of finding awards that appeal to more mature 8th graders. This year Raptor Middle School announces 8th grade names on morning announcements and give these students wrist bands, a change meant to reflect the opinions of 8th grade teachers. Teacher concern over the rewards program was brought to team representatives. The team listened, made decisions accordingly, and altered the program to respect teachers as decision-makers.

Another example of the emergence of teacher voice in the PBIS program was in the team plan for professional development. An important goal of the PBIS team's summer meeting was to develop a PBIS "refresher" meant to review and re-teach tenants of the PBIS program to staff at the back-to-school faculty meeting. A key concern for the team was that teachers feel respected and valued in this process, as teachers expressed feeling "talked down to" in the past. The 6th grade representative posed the question, "How do we re-teach this information without insulting everyone? A lot of people will just roll their eyes and say, 'We know this already.' For this training to stick, it has to seem like a worthwhile use of time." It was important to the team to show that they had listened to their colleagues; they understood that teachers felt they had been treated unprofessionally.

The team put a lot of thought into finding a way to balance the need for professionalism while also sharing the necessary tenants of the program. Initially the summer meeting agenda included two hours to work on videotaping skits to re-teach the staff. After hearing teacher voice and the need for a more professional staff development, the agenda changed. Instead of filming videos, the team took teachers on a tour of the school, discussed the expectations matrix with staff, and fostered a question/answer session in which they were able to clarify details and model the ways in which teachers could teach the expectations to students. It was evident that the team listened to the staff and adjusted based on their needs.

The PBIS program has changed since its flawed inception. Teacher voice has emerged through a strong leadership team which tries to respond to teacher concerns,

ideas, and reflections. Teacher voice has played a key role in the improvement, and ultimately in the sustainability of the program.

Commitment, Collaboration, and Communication

Commitment. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) in *School Leadership that Works* stressed the importance of identifying and cultivating teacher leaders when introducing and sustaining school programs. "Get the right people on the bus," they explained, "Schools need like-minded individuals willing to subsume personal ambition for common good (p. 101)." PBIS at Raptor Middle School has emerged and is continuing to grow as a teacher led, sustainable program. This is largely due to the respect of the staff for the commitment displayed by members of the leadership team. The power dynamics are negotiated in a manner that allows everyone equal input into the program. This group, particularly the PBIS team leader, is associated heavily with the PBIS program. Teachers perceive this group to be dedicated, persistent, and passionate about a program they believe in.

The PBIS team leader is particularly associated with the strengths of the program. "When I think of PBIS, I think of the PBIS team leader, Ms. Wilson (pseudonym). I think of her because of her excitement about it. Her positive attitude has definitely helped out. Leadership has been the biggest factor in the success of the program. Ms. Wilson has done an amazing job. You can't just try something for a couple of years and give up or decide you're not going to stick with it. The PBIS team has not done that; they have definitely stuck with it. So maybe people who didn't buy-into it at first are realizing that it's not going away. That's okay because it just is what we do, and the team continues to work to make it what we need." (T2)

Another teacher expressed similar opinions about the PBIS team leader. T6 stated, "One teacher has taken control of the committee that leads the PBIS system and she is constantly coming up with new and different ways to motivate the kids." The dedication, passion, persistence and commitment of the team leader has led to positive associations with the program.

The principal also pointed to the teacher leader most associated with the program as a key to success. A1 said, "Ms. Wilson is the straw that stirs that drink. "She's really solid. The team of teachers is highly dedicated. The team is visible and they approach things in a positive way and I think that's the key. I think sometimes, even people who are negative, once they see the positive results of it, start to buy into it." The dedication of teachers to the process has increased teacher buy-in and positive perception of the program.

The team leader recognized the whole PBIS team for their commitment. "Our biggest strength is commitment to the program. The people who are committed are *really* committed. Our assistant principal is super committed. So are the counselors. They believe in the benefits of PBIS. Of course there are ups and downs too, but the people who are most committed – we really believe PBIS is changing our school." (C1) This dedication has helped change perceptions as well.

Several teachers pointed to the commitment of the team as a primary association with PBIS. T3 stated "I value their dedication. They're very dedicated. They are constantly trying to improve the program. They're not just saying 'We've got a program. Here it is. Accept it.' They're always trying to improve and make it better. And they do

it for the students. I really appreciate that too." (T7) The perseverance of the team in facing challenges has led to greater program success.

Other teachers expressed similar ideas about the team's commitment to solving problems and facing challenges. "The biggest thing is them seeing things that didn't work out and then going back and changing them so that they did. Just trying new things; if something doesn't work out, then they try something new. And I think they really try to envision how something is going to play out and look at weaknesses and strengths." (T3) The team has gained the trust of many teachers as a dedicated group of leaders who act in the school's best interest.

Teacher T9 was asked what she valued in the team. She responded, "(A strength) would be their stamina, staying with it and trying new things. Like, 'We're not going to do the videos this year. We're going to do this instead.' Changing it up and revising it if it's not going the way they want it to." Commitment emerged as a heavily valued characteristic of the team.

"I appreciate their dedication," said T2. This opinion was shared by many teachers interviewed.

Team meeting and whole school observations supported interview data pointing to commitment as an important theme in the sustainability of PBIS at Raptor Middle School. The team showed commitment as team members met in July, during summer break, for a full day, to discuss team goals, challenges, and ways to improve the program. The team's commitment was also clear in their willingness to take on new challenges and work to adapt the program to meet rising needs.

In the 2012-13 school year, the school piloted a "Bring Your Own Device" technology policy which allowed students to carry electronics with web browsers to access curriculum and content in classrooms. Several teachers at Raptor Middle School brought the issue of the new policy to the PBIS team for review, deciding students needed clear, common expectations for their use of technology in the school. The team surveyed teachers, students, and parents and developed guidelines that followed the structure of the rest of the plan.

When the researcher walked into Raptor Middle School for the first time, she immediately notice a poster next to the main office which read "BYOD Expectations." Content from the poster is included in Table 7 below.

Table 7

Raptor PBIS BYOD Expectations

Responsibility	Use the device appropriately. Use headphones only when approved. Be responsible for your device.
Manners	Be a good digital citizen. Be mindful of others
Spirit	Protect yourself. Protect others.

At the summer PBIS team meeting, the team reviewed the BYOD issue by defining acceptable devices as "any piece of technology that helps students complete teacher assigned work." They also decided to leave decisions about cafeteria and hallway use of technology to "team discretion." The team's discussion on the new policy showed

how the PBIS structure is easily adapted to fit new situations as team members reviewed how student technology use fit in with the model of "Responsibility, Manners, and Spirit." It also showed the commitment of the team to help the school adapt to change and meet new challenges.

The PBIS leadership team at Raptor Middle School has shown determination and commitment by creating a structure that is responsive to student needs and lends itself to easy communication with teachers from across the school. The PBIS program remains relevant by staying committed to meeting new challenges and demonstrating the ability to react quickly, reflectively, and reflexively to meet arising needs. The program is sustainable, in part, because of this commitment. Staff seeks out team leaders to make decisions based on PBIS structure as issues emerge. School PBIS leadership facilitates communication between staff and is willing to respond to new challenges, so although BYOD was unheard of when PBIS was first implemented at Raptor Middle School seven years ago, the PBIS team has emerged as the body best able to handle new challenges. Values and meanings associated with PBIS in the school associate strongly with perseverance, adaptability, and commitment of the teacher leaders on the team. All are vital to the sustainability of the PBIS structure at Raptor Middle School.

Collaboration and communication. Teacher voice in communicating needs and the team's ability to hear that voice has contributed greatly to the strength of the program. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) wrote that collaboration among teachers is key to improving teaching and learning in schools. Sustainability depends on collaboration and communication. Part of the change in perception of the PBIS program that has taken place in the seven years since implementation is that the team has prioritized two-way

communication. They have found a way to clearly and consistently communicate with staff and students, and have also created ways for staff to communicate with the team.

PBIS team members shared their ideas about the importance of communication. "When I go to my grade level, they are very receptive and give me great feedback. We have community meetings every other Thursday in eighth grade. And we talk. It's a lot of brainstorming and what can we do and how can we do it." (C3) Team members prioritize two way communications and value their role in serving as liaisons to their constituents on the team.

The PBIS team leader discussed a variety of methods the team uses to add transparency to their decision making processes. "The team has several ways to communicate with staff. We survey people for opinions. We use lots of email communications. Notes from meetings are emailed to everyone and are available online. Committee members speak at monthly faculty meetings. People email committee members with questions. Teachers know they can come to any committee member one on one." (C1) Communication is valued and plays a great role in how the team operates.

One team member reflected on how the team can improve its capacity to communicate with staff members. "We didn't do such a great job with this last year. Well, the last two years. We've had so many new teachers. I don't know that there was enough communication to new teachers about what PBIS is all about and when and how we do what." (C3) By looking at ways to sharpen communication around the school, the team is able to contribute in a positive way to school success.

Administrators also discussed the importance of communication in program success. "Well, our main strength is that we do a good job making the program clear to

teachers and students." (A2) Communicating goals and ideas is an important way the program has become relevant and sustainable.

Another administrator said, "And at the middle school, I guess, it's giving them the opportunity during the school day as much as you can to sit down and have those conversations…. Sometimes the richness of conversation is as important as what you decide to do and to get teacher insight in terms of what is working and not working. That's the part that I always work to do a better job on." (A1) Communication lines, both formal and informal, are a key to teacher support of the program.

Teachers around the school placed value on the team as a communicative body, responsive to teacher and student needs and reflexive in the face of change. T8 said, "She's (Ms. Wilson) always open. She always puts out an email if you would like to bring up a certain topic, our meeting is at this time, email me and we'll put it on the agenda. It's very open." Again, a variety of communication lines exist.

T9 was asked about strengths of the PBIS team. "One (strength) is communication and getting feedback from everyone before they make rules, a lot of collaboration. Also, the teachers (PBIS team) are very well respected. And if you're unclear about something, they can clarify it for you." The team gives feedback on teacher concerns and communicates consistently.

Several teachers acknowledged the team's role in staff meetings and the way in which the team uses multiple forums to communicate. "We have whole staff meetings monthly and I feel like PBIS shares generally at all of them, but if anyone has concerns or suggestions, they can email or talk to any member of the team." (T8)

Some teachers discussed the importance of open PBIS team meetings. "Well, they've done presentations at faculty meetings. They definitely let people know when they are having meetings so if they want, they can attend." This communication and openness has changed perceptions of the program.

Teacher T1 talked about an old-fashioned method of communication, the hallway chat. "Ms. Wilson's in charge of it and we're neighbors. So it's real easy for me to ask her about it." The ability to clearly communicate with staff and allowing opportunities for the staff to clearly communicate with the PBIS team has helped evolve the PBIS program into something that teachers feel they are a part of. They can contribute. It's *their* program. This has been invaluable to the improvement of PBIS and has been critical in sustaining it.

PBIS Effectiveness

For any program to be sustainable, it must first be effective. PBIS is no different. As suggested by McIntosh, Horner, and Sugai (2009), PBIS must benefit the school and its population in order to sustain. Neither teachers, nor administrators, nor students will put any thought or effort into a program that is not desirable. This is true for the PBIS program at Raptor Middle School.

Teachers, administrators, parents, and staff appreciate the positivity and clear expectations that PBIS has brought to their school. Of the 17 people interviewed, 13 identified positive traits of the program. As evidenced below, having clear expectations was important to those interviewed. Administrators clearly expressed the need for clear expectations. A1 said, "I think its teaching expectations. I think that's the key; that we're all in agreement." A2 agreed, stating, "We can't assume students know what they haven't

been taught. Teaching expectations leads to success." PBIS at RMS serves a strong vehicle for teaching and reinforcing expectations for student behavior.

PBIS team members also focused on the way in which PBIS can aid in the process of maintaining consistent expectations school-wide. "We teach all of our students the expectations so each student at our school knows those RMS expectations," C1 said. C2 added, "Consistency is a strength. We can speak the same language. Kids have a clear understanding from grade level to grade level." The consistency offered by PBIS as a management structure has become a valued aspect of the program and has led to acceptance of the program by most.

Other teachers also spoke about the importance of consistency and common expectations. T8 said, "I think the matrix and the established behaviors are strengths of this program. We have the same rules and behaviors are consistent among the whole school." The PBIS plan has worked to set common behaviors across the campus.

T4 said, "Having clear cut expectations has given teachers an easier way to discipline." PBIS has found its place as a needed tool for creating common procedures and expectations for all.

PBIS has been successful in helping teachers remain on the same page across grade levels and in different locations of the school. T7 said, "We teach the expectations for different areas in the school." Again, the positive focus on communicating clear expectations is a point of agreement for many teachers interviewed.

T2 teaches many students across various grade levels. She appreciated the way in which PBIS helps maintain consistency for all students in all settings. "Having the same expectations across grade levels helps a lot in my position." She also added, "Having the

expectations clear helps the students. And I think it helps teachers, especially those that are new to understand the expectations for Raptor." For specialists, elective teachers, and others who interact with students across grade levels and settings, PBIS has become an appreciated tool for maintaining consistency.

T6 summarized the power of PBIS and how it has found its way into the Raptor Middle School culture. "It (PBIS) just really fits with most of our philosophies. You know, raise them right and you don't have to worry as much."

The importance of creating and maintaining clear expectations was also visible during school observations. Upon entering the doors of Raptor Middle School, the first thing visitors see is a 8' x 6' sign portraying the PBIS matrix. Clear expectations are listed for every area in their school. Smaller versions of this sign are posted in every hallway, both outside and inside the restrooms, at the entrance of the cafeteria and also inside of the cafeteria, near the exit doors to the bus parking lot, in classrooms, and in the gymnasium.

In addition to creating and maintaining clear expectations for students at Raptor Middle, teaching and modeling those expectations emerged as important and beneficial components of PBIS. As A2 said, “Teaching expectations leads to success.” Another administrator added, “Part of PBIS is teaching the people skills that they are going to have to have. I believe we can do that as long as we model it.” (A1) Again, modeling and teaching clear expectations emerge as a powerful function of the PBIS program.

Several teachers reported that teaching expectations is a strength of the program for the school. “We teach the expectations for different areas in the school. We teach them what we expect in the bathroom, cafeteria, etc. We have a matrix and every single

year on the first day of school, we go over our expectations…. Throughout the year, we reinforce the expectations with mini-lessons. We are getting back to individual teaching and reviewing the expectations." (T7) It was clear during administrative interviews that adhering to the PBIS model was non-negotiable. A1 stated, "It's rigid in terms of everyone is required to teach the expectations and reinforce in a positive way. How they teach the expectations or what reinforcements they choose to use, is up to the team of teachers." The matrix is discussed several times as a focal document for maintaining and reinforcing student expectations positively.

T9 referred to the PBIS plan in her interview. "At RMS it's about responsibility, manners, and spirit. We teach all of our students the expectations so each student at our school knows what the expectations are. We model those expectations for them throughout the school – cafeteria, restroom, buses, wherever they are; gym, so that behavior is consistent and they understand. It is successful. I think the staff likes the program because it's very consistent step by step and the students know the expectation because it's in their agenda. They've been taught what to expect." Success with the program has helped changed teacher perception of an initially unpopular initiative.

Even T3 who fundamentally disagrees with PBIS and the idea that extrinsic rewards are given to students for things that they should be intrinsically motivated to do, found modeling appropriate behaviors as a positive thing for students. Again it goes back to T6's philosophy, "Raise them right and you don't have to worry as much." Part of raising children is not only teaching them what is expected, but modeling those expectations as well.

Another characteristic of PBIS that is appreciated by staff and parents at Raptor Middle is the positive culture that PBIS has helped create. Several teachers voiced this during their interviews. One team member said, "It's nice to be able to praise kids for what they are doing right instead of constantly looking for what they are doing wrong." (C2) PBIS team members consistently valued the program as a way to maintain expectations in a positive way. C1 said, "PBIS has made RMS a nicer place to be."

PBIS as a program that contributes to a positive learning environment was mentioned frequently by teachers at Raptor. T6 expressed "It's really nice to reinforce with kids what they're supposed to be doing as opposed to chewing on them when they do something wrong. I like being able to stay on the up side of things."

Similarly, T9 said, "I value the positive approach to discipline." Teachers perceive PBIS as contributing to a strong and healthy climate.

T1 discussed the importance of rewarding students and recognizing positive behaviors. "I think they (students) like getting recognized and being able to get a little more freedom with the positive things. I like to be able to reward kids." (T1)

One administrator also pointed to the power of PBIS as a reminder to positively reinforce student behaviors. "Praising students is important. They need a lot of praise." The focus on reward, praise, and positivity has helped sustain PBIS as a valued program.

Observation data corroborates respondent interviews regarding the effects of PBIS on helping to reinforce positive school culture. Posted in the hallways of Raptor Middle are multiple examples of student character recognition. Student athletes of the week are displayed not only for their contributions to their sport(s), but for behavior specifically related to character and to the PBIS matrix. Several classroom bulletin

boards, including the PE department board, reinforce messages of positive behavior and recognize students exhibiting particularly strong character. Even front office staff interacts with students positively and remind students of the importance of character both in and outside of school.

It's no secret that all of us perform better when we feel better about what we do. PBIS has created a positive culture that not only benefits students in their ability to be rewarded for exhibiting appropriate behavior, but also helps teachers as they can be more productive in a positive environment. The more teachers enjoy what they do, the better they will be. The better the teachers are, the more the students benefit. Bottom line, educators want what's best for kids. At RMS, PBIS helps create a positive culture that is good for kids.

Conclusion

The PBIS program at Raptor Middle School had every reason to fail. Implementation was not done with teacher buy-in as a priority. The administrator in charge of PBIS and the PBIS team did not seek to hear teacher voice or foster teacher leadership at the core of the initiative. Teachers were powerless in both the decision to implement PBIS and also in the initial design of PBIS. Many teachers saw PBIS as a top-down program introduced by force with little consideration of teacher needs or values. There was confusion because PBIS and BIC were introduced simultaneously. Teachers had no input or clarification in determining how one program – PBIS, a school-wide reward-based student behavior management system, related to the other – BIC, a system to manage disciplinary referrals. Many teachers felt like their classrooms were already successful and immediately felt as though PBIS was taking power away from teachers'

ability to manage student behavior in classrooms. The program was not presented as a good match for school culture and meeting true school needs. Many teachers did not feel PBIS was necessary, and many still seem unsure about the need for a behavior modification program. Overall, teachers did not feel a respect for their professionalism.

Through the years, PBIS has had other problems at Raptor Middle School as well. They have had difficulty finding a reward system that works, particularly with 8th grade. They have had teachers and administrators come and go. Time is a factor as new statewide initiatives have been put in place. And yet, the story of PBIS at Raptor Middle School is the story of a school sustaining a program despite the many bumps in the road and the waxing and waning of program success. PBIS has become a part of the school's culture. Today, seven years later, the program is looked at positively by almost everyone. In fact, the program is arguably stronger now than it was at the very start. Even the two interviewed who do not believe in extrinsic rewards and fundamentally disagree with the purpose of PBIS acknowledge that the program is stronger now than before, and that it is part of the culture of Raptor Middle.

So how was the PBIS program sustained through these missteps? Teacher leaders have emerged to change overall perceptions and beliefs about the program's value to the school. Teacher voice emerged. The dedication and persistence of teacher leaders have been recognized by the staff as the driving force behind the program, changing the perception of the program from a top-heavy administrative initiative with no relation to teacher or school needs to a model that can be easily adapted based on teacher input and student issues. Teacher leaders have prioritized opening lines of communication between teachers and decision makers as a means for allowing voices to be heard. The leadership

team has shown commitment in responding to teacher voice by tweaking PBIS structures in order to keep the program relevant and necessary. Sustainability has been a long process guided by teacher leaders responding to teacher voice.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS

The purpose of this qualitative research was to explore PBIS sustainability through the lens of symbolic interactionism in a single school case study. The researcher looked to examine the ways in which stakeholder perceptions, values and beliefs shaped the sustainability of the PBIS program. Interviews were conducted with teachers on the PBIS leadership team, other teachers, administrators, and parents. The researcher observed the whole school environment, staff meetings, and PBIS leadership team meetings. Data was analyzed by color-coding transcripts, as well as cutting and pasting onto theme posters.

The researcher intended to provide a narrative of stakeholder interaction within a purposefully sampled case of PBIS sustainability in order to: (a) explore stakeholder meanings, values, beliefs, and behaviors within this system, (b) explore how PBIS sustainability is shaped within this environment, and (c) explore how power is negotiated within that process. To fulfill the purpose of this study, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What are stakeholder meanings, values, and beliefs in relation to the PBIS program in the case study middle school?
2. What interactions and processes are used to construct sustainability within the case?
3. What power dynamics are present in the school?
4. How are power dynamics negotiated between administrators and teachers, specifically in relation to the PBIS program?

5. How are power dynamics, specifically in relation to the PBIS program, negotiated among teachers?
6. What are the key factors that contribute to successful sustainability of PBIS?

Findings and Interpretations

The research questions were addressed by the themes that emerged from interview data and were detailed in Chapter 4. The themes are as follows:

1. School culture.
2. Teacher buy-in.
3. Teacher voice.
4. Commitment, collaboration, and communication.
5. PBIS efficacy.

Success of the PBIS program at Raptor Middle School was initially inhibited by a lack of consideration for how PBIS met school needs and fit into the school's culture. Throughout the interview process, teachers remembered the implementation process as administratively driven. There was a widespread perception that PBIS would supplant teacher classroom management plans. The student population did not present significant behavior management issues to the staff and PBIS was not introduced as a program which would effectively meet school needs.

Teacher buy-in was not sought in the implementation and the program suffered. Recollections of the introduction of PBIS include the hiring of an assistant principal who was instructed to "just run with the program". Teacher leaders were not brought into the

implementation and early attempts at forming a PBIS leadership team did little to change the belief that the program was "just another thing to do."

Perceptions of the program slowly began to change, however, as teacher voice emerged and the power dynamics changed. The team focused on collaborating with teachers to meet school needs and opening lines of communication so that teacher voice could be heard in the decision-making process. PBIS team meeting observations revealed conversations that often revolve around consideration of staff reception to professional development, rewards programs, and proposed new ideas. Team members, particularly the team leader, have proven themselves resilient and persistent in efforts to use PBIS as a tool to meet changing school needs. This has been done by the team itself and not by administration. The introduction of BYOD student technology district policy provided an example of how PBIS provides a structure to help the school adapt to change. In interviews, teachers consistently reported respect for the commitment of the PBIS team members.

Teachers have recognized the stability and positivity PBIS provides to the school. Interviews revealed that most teachers recognize the importance of having an overarching set of student expectations that hold true in every aspect of school life and in all areas of the building. Teachers acknowledged the importance of a plan like PBIS in helping teachers new to the school adapt to common expectations. Seven years after implementation, PBIS is a sustained and successful program at Raptor Middle School.

After 17 interviews were conducted and more than 40 hours were spent in observation, a level of saturation was reached and dominant themes emerged. Interview and observation data point to the following results:

Stakeholder Meanings, Values, and Beliefs

In relation to the PBIS program, stakeholders value the dedication and persistence of the teacher leaders on the PBIS team. Again and again, respondent teachers point to a shift in perceiving the program as "top down" and "administratively driven" to viewing it as a teacher led initiative. This reflects a clear transition in the power dynamics of the program. The beliefs which stakeholders attach to the PBIS program have changed over time as teacher leaders have encouraged the emergence of teacher voice in PBIS decision-making.

Interactions and Processes Used to Construct Sustainability

Interactions between teachers and PBIS team representatives are keys to the sustainability of the program. When the program was viewed as forced without teacher input, support waned. Teachers felt powerless during this time. As the belief that PBIS is a collaborative effort has grown and teachers have been encouraged to take ownership of the program, support has strengthened and teachers have come to appreciate what the program offers in terms of stability and tone. The effectiveness of the PBIS program has also aided in the sustainability process. As the program has taken root, teachers have recognized the importance of common expectations and guidelines for student behavior.

Power Dynamics

The program has gained ground as teacher leaders have opened lines of communication, encouraged collaboration, and listened to teacher voice. At Raptor Middle School, a powerful administrative push for a program without respect for teacher buy-in was not successful. Similar to results found by Ingersoll (1996) and Adams

(2007), teachers can't be the last to know about a program if the program is to be successful.

The amount of power teachers hold is directly related to program success and ultimately, program sustainability. In the case at Raptor Middle, sustainability was only made possible once teacher support was prioritized and teachers were afforded an equal say. Since the introduction of the program, the administration has changed. The current principal prioritizes communication with teachers and empowering teacher leaders. This has resulted in a truly teacher led PBIS program and one that has proved to be effective and sustainable. This is not surprising as previous research has shown that authentic teacher empowerment is key to maintaining successful programs (Bogler, 2004; Ingersoll, 1996). Observations of staff meetings also showed evidence of empowering teachers as the teachers felt free communicating about issues to the principal and around him. They were comfortable making decisions as teacher leaders.

Power dynamics among teachers and administrators are negotiated through compromise and communication. PBIS has become flexible, with different teams and different grade levels altering the program to meet specific needs. As school needs change, the team seeks teacher input on how to problem solve. A "one size fits all" model was seen as an intrusion on teacher autonomy in the classroom and was not supported. The PBIS team structure is now designed to empower all teachers in decision making and allow teachers the autonomy to mold PBIS into something that is useful for them. Teachers bring issues and questions to representatives from all grade levels. Representatives present this information to the team and report back to their peers. PBIS team meetings have also been made open to all teachers.

Key Factors that Contribute to Successful Sustainability of PBIS

Key factors which contribute to a successfully sustained PBIS program at Raptor Middle School include matching school needs and school culture with program implementation, garnering teacher buy-in, the emergence of teacher voice, dedication, collaboration and consistency, and PBIS efficacy.

Research Gap

Research on PBIS sustainability is limited. A review of the literature uncovered four studies by McIntosh et al. (2012), Sugai and Horner (2006), Coffey and Horner (2012), and Sparks (2007). These studies are quantitative in nature and involve multiple settings, while the purpose of this research is to explore one case study using qualitative methods. A summary of the research found that the four most common factors in PBIS sustainability were: the presence of a PBIS leadership team, strong administrative support, quality professional development, and the use of data to guide decisions.

The current study is unique in that it used the lens of symbolic interactionism to frame a qualitative exploration of the concept of PBIS sustainability in a single case study model. In providing stakeholders the opportunity to express feelings, values, interactions, and experiences about the program and its sustainability over time and conducting extensive observations, this case study intended to expand on the current body of PBIS sustainability literature by adding the unique perspective of individuals involved in the process.

Limitations

Limitations to this research are inherent to the design of the study. The study used a sample of only one rural middle school in Western North Carolina. Results cannot

be generalized to a larger sample or a different context. Respondents answered questions that asked them to reflect over a period of almost seven years. Responses relied on respondent memory. Therefore responses could be reflective of this time gap or be missing important details about the program's evolution over the years. Another limitation is the possibility of researcher bias. Due to personal experience I believe that, if implemented appropriately, PBIS is an effective behavior management program in middle school. One final limitation is within the PBIS program at Raptor Middle School. The research was purely completed with PBIS sustainability as the focus. The PBIS program itself was not investigated. Therefore, it must be stated that this research was on sustainability of the current program at Raptor Middle School and does not suggest actual effectiveness of the program. Through the current research, only whole school expectations and reinforcements were observed.

Implications

This research has implications for those interested in both PBIS and program sustainability in schools. Adelman and Taylor (2003) explored the sustainability of school-based program implementations. They stressed the importance of garnering support and buy-in among stakeholders, and reinforcing how the program fits in with specific aims for instructional improvement. Han and Weiss (2005) also emphasized the importance of teacher buy-in to sustaining initiatives in schools. This research confirms these findings in relation to the PBIS program.

While the PBIS program at Raptor Middle was able to survive a poorly received implementation and eventually transform into a sustainable school program, progress was impeded by the initial lack of teacher voice in the process, the lack of teacher buy-in, and

a lack of consideration for school culture in matching the program to school needs. Teachers at Raptor Middle School have not forgotten their initial impression of PBIS as an administratively forced initiative. It has taken time and hard work to change this belief and gain the trust of teachers in the program and in program leadership. Implied in this narrative is the essential piece of meaningfully involving teacher stakeholders in the rollout of any school initiative. The purpose and possibility of PBIS was lost in the implementation. Even positive, research based programs depend heavily on teacher voice in the decision making process.

Future Directions

Future research to expand on the findings of this study includes conducting a similar case study in a school with different needs, different demographics, and different grade levels. It would help complete the narrative of teacher leadership in regards to the PBIS program to explore the leadership team styles and priorities of a school with more serious and urgent student behavior problems. It is possible that more dire needs in regards to student behavior management would result in more immediate teacher acceptance of PBIS regardless of the implementation process. Another future direction is an examination of a PBIS program that was not successfully sustained in order to examine the reasons for the breakdown in perception of PBIS as necessary and vital.

This research also includes recommendations for Raptor Middle School in continuing to sustain the PBIS program. For seven years, the program has been spearheaded by one teacher team leader who is respected, passionate and dedicated. One recommendation is that Raptor Middle School should work on a succession plan to prepare for the possibility that this one teacher leader cannot lead the team in the future.

A second recommendation is for Raptor Middle School to continue to explore the ways in which PBIS can meet specific school needs and make a better fit with school culture. Interviews, observations, and discipline data show that serious student behavior problems have never been a glaring issue at the school. The program should be continually revised to meet school needs. Teachers identify students tardy to class and passive off-task behaviors as school needs that PBIS could meet. A third recommendation is for the PBIS team to "adopt" the BIC process. For better or worse, the two are connected. It's possible to have the two complement each other. One final recommendation to the PBIS leadership team is to strengthen community and family support and awareness for the program. Parent interviewing revealed a lack of knowledge about PBIS at Raptor Middle School beyond information in the handbook. Parent support is vital to the long term success of any school initiative.

Conclusion

This qualitative single case study explored factors that lead to PBIS sustainability. The theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism informed the research by proposing that stakeholder perceptions, beliefs, and values change over time and have influence on the success or failure of policies and decisions. The literature implied that PBIS leadership teams, administrative support, use of data, and staff development are key factors in PBIS sustainability. According to data collected from interviews and observations, teacher leadership and the emergence of teacher voice in decision making were decisive factors in the sustainability of PBIS at Raptor Middle School. Underlying themes uncovered in the research include the initial missteps of the program due to a lack of teacher buy-in and lack of program relevance to meet school needs, the importance of

teacher leaders' perseverance and determination, focus on communication and professionalism, and the capacity for flexibility and adaptability to help guide change. The underlying conclusion of the data is that teacher leadership must be an integral component of a school-based PBIS program in order to attain sustainability. Teacher voice must emerge as integral in the decision making process if PBIS is to become a valued school wide initiative.

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APPENDICES

Page

Appendix A

School Personnel Informed Consent Document

I am interested in PBIS program sustainability and am collecting data on the subject for my dissertation. I would appreciate it if you would be a participant in my study. Participation is completely voluntary, and there is no penalty for declining to participate. Although there is personal benefit to study participants, there is the potential for improving the school-based PBIS program based on recommendations and findings from the research. There is a potential for minimal participant risk due to the nature of observation. During meeting and whole school observations, study participants may express opinions that are unpopular with colleagues or direct supervisors, potentially impacting relationships in the work place. This represents a threat to confidentiality. Under this potential circumstance, the researcher cannot guarantee confidentiality but does provide assurance that the researcher will not violate confidentiality. Interview data, however, will remain confidential.

Your agreement indicates your willingness to participate in one or more of the three aspects of the study:

- One personal interview that will last approximately 45 to 60 minutes. During the interview I will ask you to reflect on the school PBIS program. The interviews will be digitally recorded for accuracy. You will also be asked to review the transcripts to confirm that they are an accurate record of your remarks.

- A period of observation that will last over several school days and through the entirety of at least three PBIS team leadership meetings.

- An opportunity to submit documents for analysis. The documents that you select and provide will be analyzed for evidence about the PBIS program.

You may end your participation in the interviews at any time or ask me to stop the recording. Likewise, you may end your participation in the observation at any time.

Strict confidentiality will be maintained throughout this study. No records of participant names will be kept. Moreover, no identifying information will be used in the reporting of this research. All personal identifying data will be removed or changed in order to maintain confidentiality for participants and any individuals they describe. All digital recordings and observation notes will be preserved in a password-protected environment.

If you have questions about this study, you may ask me now, or contact either me or my faculty advisor later. If you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant, you may also contact the chair of the WCU Institutional Review Board. Contact information is below. As a reminder, you may withdraw consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

Principal Investigator:

Jamie Johnson

2 Rocket Drive

Asheville, NC 28803

(828) 552-2303

Institutional Review Board:

WCU Research Administration

Cordelia Camp Building, Room 110

Cullowhee, NC 28723

(828) 227-7212

Faculty Advisor:

Eleanor Blair Hilty

122 F Reid Building

Western Carolina University

828-227-3326

I have read the above information and agree to participate in this research study.

_____ _____

Participant's Signature

Appendix B

Parent Informed Consent Document

I am interested in PBIS program sustainability and am collecting data on the subject for my dissertation. I would appreciate it if you would be a participant in my study. Participation is completely voluntary, and there is no penalty for declining to participate. Although there is personal benefit to study participants, there is the potential for improving the school-based PBIS program based on recommendations and findings from the research. There are no foreseeable risks for study participants.

Your agreement indicates your willingness to participate in one personal interview that will last approximately 45 to 60 minutes. During the interview I will ask you to reflect on the school PBIS program. The interviews will be digitally recorded for accuracy. You will also be asked to review the transcripts to confirm that they are an accurate record of your remarks.

You may end your participation in the interviews at any time or ask me to stop the recording. Likewise, you may end your participation in the observation at any time.

Strict confidentiality will be maintained throughout this study. No records of participant names will be kept. Moreover, no identifying information will be used in the reporting of this research. All personal identifying data will be removed or changed in order to maintain confidentiality for participants and any individuals they describe. All digital recordings and observation notes will be preserved in a password-protected environment.

If you have questions about this study, you may ask me now, or contact either me or my faculty advisor later. If you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant, you may also contact the chair of the WCU Institutional Review Board. Contact information is below. As a reminder, you may withdraw consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

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Faculty Advisor:
Eleanor Blair Hilty
122 F Reid Building
Western Carolina University

828-227-3326

I have read the above information and agree to participate in this research study.

_____ _____

Participant's Signature Date

Appendix C

Interview Protocol for Parent and School Staff Participants

(A) Thank the participant for consenting to the interview.

(B) Review the purpose of the interview and remind the participant of his/her control over the interview. Obtain a signature on the informed consent form.

(C) Potential interview items and questions:

1. Thinking about strengths and weaknesses, tell me about PBIS at your school.
2. Tell me about factors you feel contribute to PBIS success. What factors hinder that success?
3. How do you think others perceive the PBIS program?
4. Tell me about the role of school leadership in the PBIS program.
5. Explain the make-up of and role of the PBIS leadership team.
6. How has PBIS affected the tone of the school in relation to teachers, parents, and students?
7. Tell me about the two way communication dynamic between PBIS leadership team and teachers and students?
8. What characteristics do you most value in the PBIS leadership team?
9. Are there outside factors such as economics, politics, power dynamics, or relationships that affect the success of the PBIS program? Please explain.
10. What suggestions do you have that could contribute to successfully maintaining and improving your PBIS program over the long term?
11. Are there any other issues or topics related to the PBIS program that you think are important and would like to discuss?

(D) Thank participant for his/her time. Remind participant that consent may be withdrawn at any time. Remind participant that he/she will be asked to review information from the interview.

Appendix D

Observation Guide Sheet

WNC Middle School Observation
School locations _____
Date and Times _____

1. **Classroom and school environment.**

2. **Verbal behavior and interactions. (who speaks to whom, how long, who initiates interactions, tone)**

3. **Physical behavior and gestures. (what people do, who does what, who interacts with whom, who does not interact)**

4. **Significant events or happenings.**

5. **Maps or pictures.**

Appendix E

Data Analysis Spreadsheet

	Code	team adaptability	team consistency	staff development	team persistance	admin support	overall challenges	schoolwide consistency	communication? Buy in?
PBIS team meeting observation 5-20-13	o1								
School observation 5-20-13	o2								
PBIS team meeting observation 7-9-13	o3								
staff development observation 8-20-13	o4								
PBIS team meeting observation 9-18-13	o5								
school observation 9-3-13	o6								
school observation 9-23-13	o7								
school observation 10-24-13	o8								
PLC meeting 1 observation 10-24-13	o9								
PLC meeting 2 observation 10-24-13	o10								
interview 1 - pbis team leader	i1								
interview 2 - pbis team member 8th	i2								
interview 3 - pbis team member 6th	i3								
interview 4 - pbis team member strings	i4								
interview 5 - principal	i5								
interview 6 - AP	i6								
interview 7 - media center	i7								
interview 8 - strings	i8								
interview 9 - art	i9								
interview 10 - AIG	i10								
interview 11- parent	i11								
interview 12 - ISS	i12								
interview 13 - 7th SS	i13								
interview 14 - 6th m and sci	i14								
interview 15 - 6th m and sci	i15								
interview 16 - 6-8 EC	i16								
interview 17 - 8th SS	i17								

Appendix F

Raptor Middle School PBIS and Behavior Plan

POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT

Rugby Middle School utilizes the Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) in an effort to manage discipline problems in a positive manner. Our program is unique in that we teach our students appropriate behavior within the environment at Rugby Middle School, thereby giving the students the opportunity to apply this same behavior within their community.

The PBIS model in our school is simple and uniform. Keeping the environment positive, improves time management for everyone. We believe the keys to successful behavioral management are consistency and positive interactions.

Our PBIS program includes in-depth instructions on the PBIS Model for Student Behavior, consistent reinforcement of this model by all the faculty and staff at RMS, positive incentives and rewards for appropriate student behavior, and our Back in Control (BIC) procedures for dealing with classroom disruptions.

RMS EXPECTATIONS MATRIX

		BYOD	Hallway	Cafeteria	Assembly	Bathroom	Bus	Car Rider Line	Extra-Curriculars
R RESPONSIBILITY	Be prepared Be in the right place at the right time Cooperate with and obey adults' directions	Use your device appropriately Use headphones only when approved Be responsible for your device	Have permission and a pass Follow route Arrive promptly	Purchase items Sit at correct table Ask permission to leave	Enter and exit orderly Sit in designated area	Flush Use trash cans Conserve paper/water/soap	Arrive promptly Board and exit properly Follow bus driver's rules Keep up with your belongings	Sit in designated area Take your belongings home	Put academics first Take care of uniforms and equipment Know team/club expectations
M MANNERS	Be mindful of and helpful to others Use appropriate voices and reactions Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself	Be a good digital citizen Be mindful of others	Assist others Pick up all belongings Touch your locker only	Wait your turn patiently Say please and thank you Keep aisles clear	Make room for everyone Listen intently	Wait your turn patiently Give others privacy Wash hands	Face forward in seat Make room for everyone Hold your backpack in lap	Keep phones off during school day Help keep traffic flowing Be aware of surroundings	Listen Inform coach/leader in advance of absence
S SPIRIT	Show respect Leave no trace Exhibit self worth	Protect yourself Protect others	Pick up trash Smile Respect wall art	Clean up after yourself Recycle Enjoy your meal	Enjoy the assembly Applaud/laugh/cheer when appropriate	Clean up after yourself Report problems	Pick up trash Take care of seats Report problems	Look for your ride Help others find rides Enjoy yourself	Encourage your peers Represent Rugby positively Exhibit good sportsmanship/ school spirit

Rugby's Guidelines for Behavior and Consequences

The faculty and staff of Rugby Middle School have a collective vision to ensure the safety and well-being of all of their students. Students at RMS are taught expectations within the school environment, thereby giving students the opportunity to apply this same behavior within the community. The following levels contain behaviors not accepted at RMS as well as consequence levels faculty and staff members follow.

Level III Behaviors

Infractions that are major acts of misconduct that result in the serious disruption of school order; threaten the health, safety and property of others; and any other acts of serious or repeated misconduct.

Level III Consequences (Office Referral)

Infractions are to be reported immediately to the school administration who may remove the student from the school or activity. Level III behaviors require a staff member to write a referral description on the incident(s).

Behaviors are offenses described in the County Code of Conduct which include but are not limited to:

Repeated level II offenses

Skipping Class

Bullying

Sexual Offenses

Physical Altercation & Threats

Vandalism

Possession of Stolen Property

Weapons

Tobacco, Alcohol, & Drugs

Theft

Level II Behaviors

Infractions that interfere with or disrupt the environment, teaching, and/or learning process.

Level II Consequences

Infractions are to be handled by a staff member using the school-wide BIC process.

Behaviors may include:

Disorderly conduct

Insubordination & Defiance

Disrespect

Minor Physical Altercation

Disruption

Public Display of Affection

Inappropriate Language

Class/RT Tardy

Excessive talking

Other Disruptive Behaviors

Level I Behaviors

Minor infractions that interfere with or disrupt the learning process of a student.

Level I Consequences

Infractions are to be handled by the classroom teacher by communicating to parents/guardian. Communication could include notes homes, phone call, or conferences. Teachers may always seek assistance from administration if a student continuously has Level I infractions when home communication is not effective.

Behaviors may include:

Missing Assignments/Homework

Gum

Missing Parent Signatures

Other Disruptive Behaviors

Dress Code Violations

Students with dress code violations should be sent to the office with agenda pass to phone home using the student phone. They are to ask parents to bring a change of clothes and then they are to return to class. Extreme or continuous violations should be referred to administration.

Cell Phone/Electronic Violations

Student cell phones and electronic devices are to be turned off and stored in lockers during school. If students are caught with a device during school hours, the teacher will take away the device and give it to an administrator with a referral. Consequence steps will include: warning with parent conference, ISS, and being prohibited from bringing electronic devices to school.

Students may use cell phones and electronics in the afternoon car rider lines in a non-disruptive manner.

Consequences

SCHOOL-WIDE CLASSROOM DISRUPTION CONSEQUENCES (BIC) CLASSROOM DISRUPTIONS

Rugby Middle School utilizes a Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) in an effort to manage discipline problems in a positive manner. When we deal with discipline, we use as many interventions as possible to give every student a chance to be successful. For minor classroom disruptions, teachers will follow the school-wide consequence steps for students that are not following the schools RMS expectations. The purpose of programs such as BIC is to assist teachers with classroom disruptions that interfere with or disrupt teaching. “Back In Control” allows a student to immediately refocus and to think about his/her behavior before it escalates. The consequences are immediate and they increase in levels during the week. Each week students are given the chance to start over.

School-Wide Consequences

For Level II Behaviors

Infractions that interfere with or disrupt the teaching or learning process in the classroom.

Individual students receive a verbal warning for level II behaviors each day in each class. Some incident warnings could carry over the next day such as class tardies. The purpose of warnings is to give students a chance to refocus. If the student continues to be disruptive (Level II), the school-wide consequence steps will be followed.

1. Verbal Warning

2. Lunch Detention

3. Back In Control 1 (Parent Phone Call)

4. Back In Control 2 (Parent Phone Call & Afterschool Detention)

5. Back In Control 3 (Parent Phone Call & Office Referral)

Lunch Detention

Students assigned lunch detention will receive a mark in their agenda and a lunch detention slip from the teacher. They are to report to ISS/BIC with their agenda immediately after they obtain their meal. If a student fails to serve their detention, they are reminded by the teacher that issued the detention. If the student fails to serve the detention after being warned, the issuing teacher may send the student to BIC with a BIC Referral.

BIC (Back in Control)

When students are sent to the school's BIC room, they reflect on their behavior and the school's PBIS expectations.

1. Student enters the BIC room with their agenda and gives the referral to the BIC teacher.

2. The BIC teacher will call the student's parents to inform them of the behavior and the consequence steps and actions. The student will then be allowed to speak to their parent over the phone.

3. Student will complete an assigned BIC activity and complete their academic work if applicable.

4. Student will be sent back to class with a pass.

Missing Agenda Book

Students that do not have their agenda, when a teacher asks for it to assign a consequence, will be sent to BIC.

Detention Hall

After-school detentions are assigned to students that are sent to the BIC room for the second time in a week or by an administrator. After-school detentions are from 2:50 until 3:50 and are held in our ISS/BIC room. Parents will be notified in advance to arrange transportation.

In-School Suspension Program (ISS)

The In-School Suspension Program (ISS) is set up to provide an alternative to home suspension. Students are counted present and given academic work by their teachers to complete in isolation.

Out-of-School Suspension (OSS)

Students may be suspended from school for violations of School Discipline policies under the discretion of school administration. Suspended students are considered absent for the school day and are not to be on any school grounds in Henderson County.

HCPS Student Code of Conduct

Students and parents are provided with a copy of the Student Code of Conduct that outlines HCPS student behavior guidelines, major infractions and consequences, and student bus conduct. Students and parents are to review this publication carefully.

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