Positive Behavior Supports: The Involvement of Students in the Process

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This dissertation titled
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ABSTRACT

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Students who exhibit disruptive and possibly aggressive behaviors pose a challenge for schools, as administrators and teachers are often held responsible for managing these behaviors. The goal of this study is to identify contributing factors to student involvement in School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports (SWPBS), evidence of overall improvements in discipline problems, and subsequent implications regarding the unique features of student involvement in SWPBS. A phenomenological approach was used to discover and explain the experiences and insights of study participants. Through the use of mixed methods, the effectiveness of student involvement in SWPBS was determined. This included examining office discipline referrals as well as conducting participant observation and semi-structured interviews with students and school personnel.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The “post-industrial age” has brought about a number of changes in our society, particularly in rural communities. Industries, such as farming, that once thrived in rural areas have significantly weakened, and in some cases, have expired. Schroth, Pankake, Fullwood, and Gates (2001) suggest the loss of local economic control to national and international markets has left rural communities helpless and has led to a loss of the traditional sense of belonging for many rural families. The authors also noted, “The tightly knit rural family, traditionally viewed as a stabilizing influence on students and strength of rural life, is also weakening” (p. 10).

According to Schroth, et al. (2001) a lack of industry in rural areas is also coupled with an influx of suburban families. In an effort to seek crime-free, safer environments for their children, families are moving to rural areas. Schools in rural areas seem inviting to parents who are determined to provide educationally sound and safe learning environments for their children. Unfortunately, this image of rural America as being crime-free is a misconception. Schroth et al. (2001) explain that families with adequate means to relocate to rural areas are confronted with a rise in crime and violence that may be associated with increased enrollment in rural schools. The authors report that school size could be a predictor of violence and crime, although rural schools typically have fewer students enrolled than schools in urban areas. Other factors or characteristics that may have a direct or indirect impact on students’ academic and behavioral performance
include funding inequities related to the quality of education in rural schools, high unemployment rates, and a rapidly increasing rate of poverty.

Wheeler and Anderson (2002) explain that incidents of crime, violence, unemployment, and poverty in rural areas may influence students’ behavioral performance. They point out that in many rural schools, students exhibit high rates of disruptive behavior, including hyperactivity, inattentiveness, and defiant and noncompliant behaviors. Wheeler and Anderson (2002) report these behaviors as especially evident with younger school-aged students. According to Wheeler and Anderson, (2002) statistics from rural areas in the United States indicate that 7% to 20% of preschoolers are identified as having oppositional defiant disorder (ODD). A diagnosis of ODD is defined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th edition, revised (DSM-IV-TR) of the American Psychiatric Association (2000) to include at least four or more defiant behaviors that can include hostility (particularly towards adults), refusal to comply with rules, and/or blaming others for their mistakes. Behaviors must exist for longer than six months and are shown to adversely affect educational, social, and work-related performance. Students are also being identified as having conduct disorder (CD) which is characterized by anti-social behaviors that include aggressive behavior (such as threatening others) causing physical harm to people, animals, or inanimate objects, lying, and/or cheating (Wheeler & Anderson, 2002). Conduct disorder is defined by the DSM-IV-TR (2000) to include a pattern of repetitive behavior that exists when the rights of others and social norms and rules are violated. To diagnose conduct disorder, patterns of anti-social behaviors must
include at least one existing behavior over a 12-month period or three or more behaviors that are evident over a 6-month period of time.

Many school administrators and teachers continue to use reactive and punitive methods when managing disruptive behaviors. Traditional disciplinary methods, which include detentions, in-school suspension, and expulsion, have been found to be ineffective and only exacerbate problem behaviors (Lewis & Garrison-Harrell, 1999; Lewis-Palmer, Sugai, & Larson, 1999). An alternative to traditional methods of discipline that has gained popularity is the use of School-wide Positive Behavior Supports (SWPBS). The SWPBS process emphasis is more on teaching socially acceptable behaviors rather than just reducing maladaptive behaviors (Lewis, Powers, Kelp, & Newcomer, 2002). Lewis et al. (2002) outline previously conducted studies that have implemented SWPBS and have shown successful results. These studies reflect the use of defining school-wide behaviors and subsequently teaching expected behavior to students. Studies have shown outcomes have positive results in the reduction of problem behaviors exhibited school-wide.

**Background of the Study**

Some schools have used a student-by-student, reactive, short-term method of management when coping with disruptive behaviors. Todd, Horner, Sugai, and Sprague (1999) advise that individual student intervention may be necessary. They recommend the implementation of SWPBS, a comprehensive, school-wide approach. SWPBS constitutes a system of a continuum of supports for students, staff, and faculty that can help ease the feeling of isolation and powerlessness for teachers and students in schools.
According to Lewis and Sugai (1999), strategies for prevention of problem behaviors existing on this continuum include: a) Primary prevention, used to decrease the number of new problem behavior cases that may occur school-wide and for all students. Universal interventions seek to reinforce a school-wide management system. b) Secondary prevention focuses on reducing the number of problem behavior cases originating from students who are at-risk and account for 5–15% of the school population. This group may need interventions that can be delivered in small groups, or they may individually share common interventions. c) Tertiary prevention level supports students that account for 1 to 7% of the student population and seeks to reduce the number of long-standing problems. Lewis and Sugai (1999) explain these students are typically at high-risk for emotional and behavioral problems. Interventions involve decreasing maladaptive behaviors by their intensity, frequency, or duration. Often an Individual Education Plan (IEP) can communicate interventions determined through a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) and can be outlined in an individual SWPBS plan (Turnbull, Wilcox, Stowe, & Turnbull, 2001).

More recently, and in response to mandates from No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) (www.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/idea2004.html), this continuum of behavioral supports and interventions has merged with interventions to improve academic performance (Ohio Department of Education, 2006). According to the Ohio Department of Education, law mandates that Local Education Agencies (LEA) design and use interventions to meet academic standards and the behavioral needs of all
students. Specifically, Ohio has adopted the Ohio Integrated Systems Model (OISM) that encompasses both behavioral and academic supports and interventions, specific to each level of the continuum (Lewis & Imler, 2007).

*Figure 1: Ohio Integrated Systems Model*

Lewis and Imler (2007) describe this model as conceptually represented in a cone figure that provides supports across three tiers that include: a) *school-wide* (80-90% of students); a) *targeted* (5-10% of students); and c) *intensive* (1-5%). They further explain that OISM involves comprehensive, collaborative planning among teachers, parents, related service personnel, and administrators. It is recommended that preliminary data from standards-based assessments be used to further develop literacy initiatives to make progress towards grade-level indicators that are aligned with content standards.
The focus of SWPBS, in conjunction with systems models such as the Ohio Integrated Systems Model, is to meet the emotional and academic needs of students, whether it is a collective group of students or an individual student. In the effort to implement new practices and make improvements under models such as OISM, teachers receive training and professional development (Lewis & Imler, 2007). Ultimately, the student is the core recipient of services rendered, yet there are few instances described in which students are directly involved in the planning of SWPBS initiatives. Traditionally, in SWPBS, students have only participated in the implementation stage. They are seen as the subjects or participants in the process, especially when part of a research project (De Pry & Sugai, 2002; Kennedy et al., 2001; Lewis, Powers, Kelk, & Newcomer, 2002; Molina, Smith, & Pelham, 2005). In most studies, students are introduced to pre-determined rules and behavioral expectations and are instructed in the practice of these behaviors. Students may participate in activities such as making posters or writing essays that describe the use of school rules (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). In Molina, Smith, and Pelham’s (2005) program evaluation, students were viewed as stakeholders when students and teachers completed questionnaires to determine consumer satisfaction with the SWPBS plan. However, only 44% of the students reported they wanted to continue the program into the next year. The authors explained this low percentage as indicating that “greater efforts might be needed to achieve student acceptance of the program” (p. 338). During the implementation of the program, yearly, on-going meetings were held to improve and make changes without the involvement of students.
This pattern of lack of student involvement is not limited to one level of support. When implementing school-wide, setting-specific, classroom levels of support, or individual supports, the same pattern of superficial or peripheral student involvement is seen. However, involvement on the individual level may be more substantial. Hieneman, Dunlap, and Kincaid (2005) allude to student participation at this level by communicating that support teams can include the student, if appropriate. A more common pattern seen in SWPBS is at the individual level for students with more chronic, severe behavior in which no mention of student involvement is made until the implementation phase. This involvement often consists of the student self-monitoring his/her behaviors (Kennedy et al., 2001) or signing contracts of agreement (Goodall, Groah, Boyer, & Russo, 1996).

Why is there a lack of student involvement in SWPBS initiatives? The answer may lie in the issue of treatment fidelity and a need to have verifiable, quantifiable results. Corbett and Wilson (1995) suggest another reason may be due to the inflexible nature of current school reform practices. They further suggest that constructivism, an accepted best practice, is used for academic instruction, but not in the arena of teaching behavioral expectations. Finally, the authors suggest that many educators see students as subordinate, and student involvement would presume a more equal status between adults and students.

Muncey and McQuillan (1991) found that in some cases teachers felt they might “lose control” and power would “shift away” from them if the administration allowed student input into what they perceived as faculty decisions. In another case, students were only involved in select activities and an attempt was made to convince the students they
were being involved in important decision-making matters. The authors also address the issue of empowerment as “gift giving.” Their findings suggest that empowerment was bestowed upon the students by the faculty. Students felt patronized and misled by staff and administration.

The evolutionary practices of SWPBS, or in general, Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) are based foundationally upon the use of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). Carr et al. (2002), outline ABA as having made two very important contributions to PBS. First, the principles of ABA support the phenomena of behavior change seen in PBS through its foundational underpinning of operant conditioning, the concept of stimulus control, maintenance, and generalization. Second, ABA has a direct link to assessment purposes as it encourages the use of experimental methods to determine the function of behavior as well as the selection of interventions that can used to promote adaptive behaviors and maintain the integrity of individuals and their needs. According to Carr et al., (2002) PBS is an applied science that uses the fundamental application of ABA techniques through educational means to improve a person’s quality of life and further develop his/her repertoire of socially acceptable behavior. Additionally, they support the notion of treatment integrity in regard to PBS by writing, “The primary goal of PBS is to help an individual change his or her lifestyle in a direction that gives relevant stakeholders (e.g., teachers, employers, parents, and the targeted person) the opportunity to perceive and enjoy an improved quality of life” (p. 5).

In a recent meta-analysis McIntyre, Greshman, DiGennero, and Reed (2007) discuss this fundamental purpose of treatment integrity or fidelity to be especially
important since it is a typical phenomenon found in studies that use schools as the primary setting of inquiry. Following specific criteria in the selection of school-based studies, McIntyre et al. looked at 142 studies between the years of 1991-2005. Using a rating system, specific variables of the studies were assessed. These variables included the check for an operational definition of the independent variable to determine if treatment integrity was systematically monitored and if any apparent risks for treatment inaccuracies were found. Surprisingly, 95% of the experiments used an operational definition of the independent variable. However, only 30% of the studies systematically monitored treatment integrity, and 45% of the studies show high levels of treatment inaccuracies. McIntyre et al. (2007) found that in comparing these results with a previous measurement of treatment fidelity conducted between the years of 1980 -1990 that some improvements had been made, as only 32% of the earlier studies provided operational definitions with 16% systematically reporting treatment integrity measures. This slight improvement may have some correlation with NCLB (U.S. Department of Education, 2002) and the IDEIA more recently mandating that teachers implement the use of evidence-based practices and be held responsible for these practices. McIntyre et al. (2007) explain that little research has been conducted in the area of assessing treatment fidelity in school-based studies, and more should be done. They recommend that behavior change programs should involve articulating detailed intervention steps as well as determining specifics in how to assess treatment fidelity.

In a survey conducted with 134 PBS experts regarding their use of PBS and treatment acceptability, Michaels, Brown, and Mirabella (2005) found that most
professionals used methods that were proactive and sought to increase expected behaviors. Some of the individuals surveyed explained they would use more consequence-based procedures only if necessary. Michaels et al. (2005) explain that treatment acceptability involves the determination if a treatment is acceptable or unacceptable. Through their study, the authors were able to determine that PBS experts are redefining the conceptual connection between PBS and ABA as they choose more acceptable interventions that foster individuals’ values, interests, and opportunities for normalization. Opportunities for normalization and self-determination can further be fostered when school-aged students with or without disabilities are given a voice through active participation in SWPBS. Such an opportunity could serve as a check-and-balance when determining if a treatment is acceptable and meets the individual’s value of self-determination, as the person is able to make choices and decisions.

From a qualitative research perspective, Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach, and Richardson (2005) examined several studies that focused on the perspectives of the recipients of special education relative to school and classroom practices. Brantlinger and colleagues gleaned through these studies that more open discourse is needed between researchers and individuals who are recipients of special education services. Treatment acceptability through active involvement in the research process of persons with or without disabilities should include, as Brantlinger et al. (2005) advise, “ …to question what we think we know and who we think we are as professionals and open space for discussion with recipients of special education services…” (p. 200).
How does treatment acceptability specifically translate to children being involved in research practices, such as SWPBS? From a phenomenological theoretical perspective, Vygotsky’s Social Cultural Theory supports the need to explore a child’s development through deriving meaning from social interactions that include a linkage between cognition and speech that are representative of how the child defines his/her world (McPhail, 1995). Vygotsky saw that adults can foster cognitive development by being aware of a child’s zone of proximal development (ZPD), which involves a child’s ability to perform a range of tasks with adult guidance, that otherwise the child could not perform independently (Ormrod, 2003). Invariably, children have varying ZPD and cognitive developmental levels that need to be taken into consideration when students are actively involved in school reform efforts such as SWPBS. For example, during the concrete operations stage, Piaget describes the cognitive abilities of a child to be able to make logical decisions, yet the child may need to address problems in isolation (Wadsworth, 1979). As children mature and enter the formal operations stage, Piaget proposes youth can readily express their thoughts to make sense of others and see that relationships are reciprocal. However, Piaget notes these children still make judgments based upon what is logical and not necessarily what is realistic (Wadsworth, 1979). As researchers take into consideration age, grade level, and developmental capabilities, the advice of Grover (2004) should lead their efforts. Grover writes, “What is clear is that children have been virtually excluded as active participants. Telling their story in their own way, the research experience is often personally moving and meaningful and the data provided rich and complex” (p. 84).
Statement of the Problem

Schools are faced with a plethora of problems, most notably how to handle problematic student behavior. In the past decade, the focus of SWPBS has been to meet the emotional and academic needs of students, whether it is a collective group of students or an individual student. Yet, there are few instances where students are involved in SWPBS initiatives. The lack of student involvement in school reform initiatives, such as SWPBS, has not been addressed in current literature. This study examined how the lack of involvement can be addressed when implementing SWPBS. The study explored if student involvement can promote additional improvement in student behavior as an added component to the current methods used in SWPBS.

Research Questions

This study addressed the following research questions:

Question 1: What is the current level of student involvement in the SWPBS process?
Question 2: What unique factors must be considered when adding student involvement in SWPBS?
Question 3: What are the positive and negative outcomes of student involvement in SWPBS?
Question 4: What is the effectiveness of student and adult developed interventions?

Significance

This research broadened the understanding of the factors influencing student involvement in SWPBS and how students, educators, and administrative faculty benefitted from such involvement. Benefits include the empowerment of students in decisions
made relevant to their everyday school experiences as they gained a sense of leadership and responsibility. Cook–Sather (2002) recommends that youth be readily involved in “conversations about educational practice and policy” as they are generally excluded from such interactions that “determine their lives in school” (p. 3). Individuals involved in the process developed better relationships with one another as opinions, choices, and decisions were valued and supported. Corbett and Wilson (1995) explain that such opportunities can establish a “reciprocal” relationship that can “credbly capture relational qualities...” (p. 16).

This study was supported by a mixed-method approach to investigate the planning and implementation of student involvement in SWPBS. Quantitative analysis of archival office discipline referral (ODR) data was used to facilitate discussion between students and adults and assist in more unified decision-making.

Additionally, phenomenological inquiry allowed views and perceptions of staff and students in this study to provide valuable insights for effective planning and facilitation of SWPBS that included student involvement. Additionally, quantitative analysis of archival data facilitated discussion between students and adults and assisted in decision-making.

**Delimitations and Limitations of the Study**

To initially determine if the control and intervention schools shared comparable and acceptable levels of SWPBS development, the School Evaluation Tool (SET; Horner et al, 2004) is used to assess and compare current levels of SWPBS. This assessment uses a combination of scripted interviews with faculty and students and documentation of
evidence that supports the use of SWPBS. Scores from both schools needed to be obtained. Unfortunately, it was determined that the intervention school had inadequate indicators of SWPBS in place, which was reflected in the low SET scores. In addition to the intervention school’s low SET results, the control school was not able to locate SET scores from the previous school year that were to be used in the comparability analysis. Another limitation was the lack of time allocated for the study, as the pre and post-intervention period existed only between the third to the fourth nine weeks of the school year. In the analysis of results, it was difficult to say that a reduction in Office Discipline Referrals (ODR) specific to bullying incidents was attributed solely to student involvement, as this was an indirect measure. Additionally, the use of an unpaired t-test to determine statistical differences in bullying incidents reported for the intervention school can also be considered a limitation in this study. Reports were based on individual teacher determination of incidences of bullying, which can differ from individual to individual. Although discussions did occur with the SWPBS team to define these specific behaviors, not all teachers were part of the team, thus not all teachers may have used the same criterion to report specific behaviors.

To address limitations in the quantitative data, the qualitative measures of interviewing and field observations were used. Using semi-structured interviewing and participant observation can pose other limitations. Those would include the possibility of individuals observed or interviewed interacting differently, and not handling themselves in the typical manner (Patton, 2002). Patton also advises that the observer or interviewer is limited in seeing things at face-value and is not able to see what is occurring inside a
person. He explains that the interviewee’s personal bias can come into play, as the person may deal with issues of politics, opinions, and even anger. The use of such qualitative measures posed a limitation in itself, as self-reported facts and observed phenomena based upon a researcher’s recall can be subjective and limiting. This became a challenge and added another level of bias, as in this study, a phenomenological approach was used. Under those circumstances, the phenomenological researcher kept reflection and interpretation of observed experiences as retrospective, rather than introspective (Patton, 2002).

Another limitation common to qualitative studies is the issue of generalization of the results. The findings of this study were limited to one specific group of students and staff in a rural school district. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) do not imply that data from a particular group of participants are generalizable to other participants. Rather, they encourage the researcher to see that there are commonalities between similar settings and participants. This is based upon the assumption that human behavior is not random. Reliability is also of concern in any research study. This study gathered qualitative data that is thick in description and detail and guided by accuracy and comprehensiveness. As recommended by Bogdan and Biklen, (1998) qualitative research methods are more focused on obtaining accuracy and thorough data. This study implemented a SWPBS plan that is applicable to all students. Individual student supports, typically part of the SWPBS implementation, were not the focus of this study.

Additionally, the researcher in this study was faced with the challenge of experiencing a single phenomenon only once. This posed the limitation of recall and
memory. Patton recommends that qualitative reporting and documentation be conducted systematically by keeping a balance between description and interpretation. Description should not become the source of meaningless, insignificant information. However, it should include ample description and direct quotes to “allow the researcher to enter into the situations and thoughts of people represented” (p. 503). Certainly, bias on the part of the researcher can be a huge limitation as one contends with certain attitudes and opinions. Based upon the advice of Bogdan and Biklen (1998), a qualitative researcher can keep this limitation in perspective and should be concerned about how their own subjectivity may influence results and outcomes of studies. They suggest the researcher, “…objectively study the subjective states of their subjects.” (p. 33). Such advice was followed and used in this study as a member’s check was conducted when the researcher was unsure or needed clarification. On a number of occasions, the principal of the intervention school provided feedback and clarification for the researcher.

Definition of Terms

*Applied Behavior Analysis.* Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is the process of applying sometimes tentative principles of behavior to the improvement of specific behaviors, and simultaneously evaluating whether or not any changes noted are indeed attributed to the process of application (Alberto & Troutman, 2006).

*Bullying.* Bullying has been operationalized by Lee (2006) to include terminology such as intent, hurt, duration, repetition, power, and provocation. Hazler (2001) mentions primary characteristics of bullying to involve harm being done to another person repeatedly, and there is an unfair match among participants.
Functional Behavior Assessment. A functional behavior assessment (FBA) is a method of evaluation that evolved from Applied Behavior Analysis. The purpose or function of the assessment is to determine what primarily motivates those significant behaviors that are socially unacceptable and to plan subsequent interventions to change the behavior in a desired direction (Carr et al. 2002).

Individualized Education Plan. An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is a plan written to communicate present levels of performance, goals, transition planning, and/or supplemental aides or services as determined necessary to meet the individual needs of a child (Gargiulo, 2006).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) was reauthorized in 2004 and amended the PL 94-142 Education for all Handicapped Children Act of 1975. This is a federal special education law that provides procedural safeguard requirements that state and local educational agencies adhere to including the formulization of writing goals and objectives in IEPs as well as provisions for active parent involvement in educational planning. IDEIA also is a source of funding for special education programs (Trunbull, Wilcox, Stowe, & Turnbull, 2001).

No Child Left Behind. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is legislation that seeks to improve educational outcomes for all students. It emphasizes the use of evidence-based practices and all students needing to make adequate progress on standardized assessments. NCLB also requires that all teachers be “highly qualified” through state certification processes (Gargiulo, 2006).
Ohio Integrated Systems Model. The Ohio Integrated Systems Model (OISM) conceptualizes a tiered approach of behavior as in the PBS levels of intervention (see below) and reading support. It also supports research-based instruction that provides a high level of culturally-responsive instruction. The top layer of the tiered model represents instructional and behavioral supports that are applicable to the needs of all students. The middle portion of the tier provides more specific instruction for those students who are at risk for academic failure or behavior challenges. The top portion of the tier represents the intensive supports for those students who are high risk for academic failure and have behavioral difficulties (http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?page=3&TopicRelationID=1110&ContentID=16304&Content=37295).

Positive Behavior Supports. Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) applies the use of methods to teach and further develop an individual person’s autonomy. PBS proactively examines and plans for change that can be made in the environment to assist the individual. The purpose of these supports is to enhance a person’s quality of life and subsequently change behavior in a desired direction (Lewis & Sugai, 1999).

PBS levels of intervention. PBS levels of intervention include school-wide, non-classroom settings (e.g., hallways, cafeteria), classroom settings, and the individual student. At each of these levels, problem behaviors are targeted for improvement by identifying, teaching, and reinforcing expected behaviors (Lewis & Sugai, 1999).

PBS prevention continuum. The intention of the prevention of problem behavior is an overall theme that is featured on a continuum that includes, primary, secondary, and
tertiary prevention level supports. Lewis and Sugai (1999) define three levels of SWPBS respectively; these levels include universal supports for most students, specialized support for students with at-risk problem behavior, and supports for students who have chronic problem behavior (Lewis & Sugai, 1999).

School-Wide Information System. The School-Wide Information System (SWIS) is an electronic web-based system used to track office discipline referrals (ODR). It allows entry of ODR information with access to reports that can represent individual or school-wide incidences of problematic behaviors. Reports are used by school personnel to help design interventions and make data-based decisions (Irvin, 2006).

School-Wide Positive Behavioral Supports (SWPBS). School-Wide Positive Behavioral Supports is a system approach used to teach positive behaviors to school-aged students. When the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was amended in 1997, School-Wide Positive Behavioral Supports (PBS) found a home in the wording and action of the law. SWPBS is now viewed as valuable, because it encourages the use of positive measures to promote functional behavior, rather than aversive techniques such as punishment (Turnbull, et al. 2001).

Wraparound Services. Wraparound services is a process used to build or construct supportive connections among caregivers, service providers, families, and school personnel for those students who have emotional and/or behavioral challenges. The philosophy of wraparound services is that when supports are coordinated together a more comprehensive system of supports is provided (Eber, 2001).
CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

This chapter focuses on reviewing the traditional implementation of SWPBS. Student involvement in the process of SWPBS and other school reform initiatives are also discussed. The review of the literature has seven sections. Levels of student involvement in school reform initiatives and theoretical implications will be discussed in the first section, followed by consideration of developmental levels of school-aged students. A general overview of SWPBS is outlined in the third section, followed by data-based implementation procedures used in SWPBS in the fourth. The fifth presents interventions used by staff and faculty when using SWPBS. Student involvement in school reform initiatives other than SWPBS is examined in the sixth section, and in the final section, a theoretical framework will be discussed for data interpretation purposes.

Levels of Student Involvement in School Reform Initiatives and Theoretical Implications

Currently, there are few opportunities for students to be actively involved in SWPBS. To put this lack of involvement into perspective, Grover (2004) explains that social researchers have generally viewed research participation as a possible confounding aspect that “contaminates” data. Instead, Grover, encourages researchers to view the knowledge of participants, including children in research as providing “richer understanding and facilitate predictive power” (p. 89). When attempts have been made to include students in decisions regarding school improvement initiatives, they have often been unsuccessful. Attempts have included deceiving students by choosing insignificant issues to make it look like they are making decisions that have substance and importance.
Students reported feelings of deep suspicion and distrust of faculty and staff (Muncey & McQuillan, 1991). Muncey and McQuillan explain there are misconceptions about how to best empower students. They cite the *Oxford English Dictionary* definition of empowerment as the investment “legally or formally with power or authority, authorize, license; to impart or bestow power to an end or a purpose; to enable, permit; to bestow power upon; make powerful” (p. 1). Some adults feel they are in a position to “bestow empowerment” upon youth. The authors describe situations in which schools either viewed empowerment as a one-way process that originated with staff and was granted to students, or staff overlooked the possibility that a common definition of empowerment may not be shared between the two entities.

*Pro-Social Goal Theory*

Failure to appreciate empowerment as a shared entity between groups can lead to misconceptions and misunderstandings. Students’ lack of reliance and trust was confirmed when their input was requested with no assurance it would be accepted or used (Muncey & McQuillian, 1991). In the Pro-Social Goal Theory, Covington (2000) explains that individuals have a need to accomplish or achieve a goal for the sake of a group. Without such an opportunity, students may feel their opinion is not part of the collective whole or valued. Therefore, they may lack motivation to achieve pro-social goals.

The misuse of empowerment in the school-wide improvement processes can ultimately jeopardize treatment fidelity. Kazdin (1980) describes treatment acceptability as “judgments about the treatment procedures by non-professionals, laypersons, clients
and other potential consumers of treatment” (p. 259). These judgments, including those of children, have often been overlooked in social research. Grover (2004) posits that children should be active participants in the research process, especially when they, themselves are subjects in the process. Grover encourages the involvement of children in research efforts so they can describe and communicate experiences themselves rather than having their experiences described and analyzed by others. Under such circumstances one would question the objectivity in the accounts of children regarding their experiences as participants in research. In this study, the variable of student involvement in addition to adult perspectives, as reflected in interviews and observations, in conjunction with archival data analysis are triangulated, therefore providing purposeful evidence. When considering the strengths of mixed methods, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) see “stronger evidence for a conclusion through the convergences and corroboration of finding” (p. 15).

In two separate reports focusing on school reform with the involvement of students, positive results were documented (Furtwengler, 1991, 1996). Students reported they learned how to communicate more effectively with staff and faculty. They found value in having actively participated in solving difficult problems and working together in teams to accomplish goals. Such opportunities support William Glasser’s Choice Theory in which students’ had basic needs met such as competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). According to Furtwengler (1991), “Persons who have a strong sense of ownership and control are motivated to learn better than those who perceive that they have little control” (p. 36). This statement describes internal locus of
control where individuals seek to control important aspects of their lives (Schunk, 2000). Furtwengler (1996) reported that students learned more about complex school-related issues they had little knowledge of previous to their involvement. Students were insightful and believed teachers were very communicative in the teaming efforts, yet in the classroom, dynamics between teachers and students primarily remained the same.

Slightly different outcomes were observed in two separate school initiatives that took place in urban Chicago and rural Michigan (Goldman & Newman, 1993). Initially, quality student leadership (QSL) program objectives were set in place to provide a vision and focus for student involvement. Three incrementally sequenced phases included self-esteem/leadership, team building, and action planning. Students selected to be representatives for the student body included at-risk students, who were seen as potential leaders. The purpose of carefully selecting student representatives is to secure a level of trust so that all students are motivated, active participants. Following recommendations from Goldman and Newman (1993) supported the Pro-social Goal Theory (Covington, 2000) by having students involved in all social agreements manage how things got accomplished. They also proposed the use of problem-solving processes developed for staff and students to create a cooperative, teaming atmosphere. Finally, Goldman and Newman explained that the number one cause of problematic behavior occurs when children have an overwhelming feeling of disconnectedness in their lives. This statement provides even more rationale and motivation to find ways to ensure youth feel connected and have opportunities to contribute in significant ways to school reform.
Generally speaking, when school improvement initiatives involve students and staff, and are started early in the school year, positive discipline practices can be promoted (Kariuki & Davis, 2000). In Kariuki and Davis’s study, middle school staff and students joined as a team during the planning stage, before implementation, uniting two traditionally separate groups to make decisions. School meetings were held with teachers and students to brainstorm solutions to school-wide behavioral problems. The positive discipline plan involved the establishment of goals and consequences, regularly held meetings between teachers and students, and the choice of reinforcement rewards. Transitions were targeted as problematic as students were spending too much time between activities in class.

After the implementation of goals, consequences, and rewards, students took the leadership role to encourage their peers to be more time-efficient during transitions, with less off-task time compared to baseline data. However, it should be noted that data collection procedures only involved the teachers, as they timed students during classroom transitions. Latency times collected during baseline measures were not shared with students. Empirically, this may have allowed for more reliable data to be collected. However, during the implementation time of 4 weeks, students were aware of times being collected, which could have influenced improvements in transition times and promoted a group contingency for available rewards. Unlike the study conducted by Kariuki and Davis (2000), the students in the current study actively participated in the analysis of data in the form of histograms of ODR depicting numbers of referrals by location, time, and
incident. These data served to allow students and staff to prioritize and focus on areas most in need of change and improvement.

Goldman and Newman (1993) found the Quality School leadership (QSL) program promoted several student experiences, including 30 Chicago Public School students being elected to represent and serve as a voting council. Students and parents in one of the high-crime districts of Chicago completed a 10-week self-esteem and leadership program, and a summer program was developed with 50 potential school dropouts and teachers to build a student center. Goldman and Newman (1993) suggest such endeavors can lead to positive outcomes as coercive, controlled management transforms into a democratic process that actively involves students in decision-making. Students sense particular value in the activity, as they are actively involved.

This practice supports Eccles and Wigfield’s (2002) Expectancy-Value Theory in which an individual’s behavior may depend on how much a person finds value in a particular outcome. As students’ involvement increases, they see their decisions becoming reality and develop utility or usefulness of the task as it fits into their future (Schunk, 2000). Students have a sense of what would be motivational for the student body, providing a voice for all students. Student input is invaluable since they may also see what works effectively. Students and staff alike can see that not all problems can be solved, and the problems may be more complicated than they realize (Furtwingler, 1991). Additionally, students may become better in-tune with their external and internal locus of control, proposed in Weiner’s Attribution Theory that attempts to explain how people view the causes of their behaviors as well as others (Weiner, 1985). Causes of behaviors
can include those attributions such as ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck. Weiner proposed three causal dimensions that include locus of control, stability, and controllability. For example, a task difficulty is external and relatively stable, because task conditions do not change from time to time. However, luck is external and unstable as a person can be lucky in one instance and unlucky in another. As supported by Weiner’s Attribution Theory, students are able to decipher how others may view their own behavior as well as that of others when participating in SWPBS practices.

Developmental Theories

One needs to consider developmental levels when proposing a mutual involvement between school staff and students during school reform efforts such as SWPBS. Piaget describes concrete operations stage as the time when the child is becoming a social being, and social interaction is an important means to facilitate cognitive development (Wadsworth, 1979). When involved in dialogue with teachers, students can use language in a communicative function, which Piaget views as an opportunity for youth to learn to become less egocentric. Communication between staff and students was evident in Kariuki and Davis’s study, (2000), in which students were involved in decision-making processes. Students participated in class meetings to provide time for conversation and discussion regarding behaviors, goals they had for improvement, and choosing rewards relative to transitioning from class to class. These students may have developed a stronger sense of others, leading to a less egocentric viewpoint and a better understanding for the need to improve behavior during classroom transitions.
Another way in which students can develop a stronger sense of themselves and others is to engage in communicative problem-solving. This is a primary function of the SWPBS team (Lewis and Sugai, 1999). Piaget proposes that a child can make logical decisions, yet may need to address problems in isolation. Based upon discussion and dialogue, staff and students in the Kariuki and Davis study (2000) were able to pinpoint a specific, school-wide behavior problem, determine expected behaviors, consequences, and rewards. Nisbet and Putt (2004) conducted a study that involved elementary-age students being taught to collect, organize, and represent data sets through the use of histograms. For example, students were each asked to estimate the number of books they read during the year as well as measuring their height and arm length. Nisbet and Putt (2004) report that organization of the data into groups rose from 70% to 86% from pre-instruction to post-instruction. Additionally, they found the accuracy of representing data in a histogram increased from 7% to 74%. The study indicated students also spent time interpreting graphical information, although an analysis of this area was not provided. Data collection procedures in Nisbet and Putt’s SWPBS study involved the use of an electronic program, such as the School-Wide Information System (SWIS) to aggregate ODR data (See following description of SWIS). The current study also required students to interpret ODR data represented in graphical form. Nisbet and Putt’s (2004) study shows that with instruction and training, students can understand the process used in representing large data sets using a histogram representation. Particularly important are the comments made by Nisbet and Putt that students were motivated to participate in data
collection, since the data reflected information about themselves. Therefore, using “student focused” data, student involvement can be maintained.

In the previous study, it was evident that adult guidance and supervision was necessary as adults provided explicit modeling and guidance in helping students represent and interpret data through the use of histograms (Nisbet & Putt, 2004). Developmentally, youth need adults to guide them in the learning process. Adults can foster construction of social knowledge during the SWPBS process. Corbett and Wilson (1995) recognize the necessity of adult interaction, and their responsibility to guide students in decision-making. An adult can provide assistance in challenging tasks such as the revision of school rules and identifying expected behaviors that are within a child’s zone of proximal development (Ormrod, 2003). Vygotsky shares similar views with Piaget and proposes that adults can foster a child’s cognitive development (Ormrod, 2003). Vygotsky believes that a child can process information more effectively when engaged in meaningful, engaging activities which are rooted in social interaction.

Several benefits arise from adult interactions with youth ranging in ages from 11 to 15, who are in a formal operations stage of development while actively participating in SWPBS. For example, these youth can reason about non-observable phenomena that are not directly tied to the concrete. They can develop reasoning skills that allow them to hypothesize and predict. They are capable of introspection and solving problems in an integrated manner, which is helpful when participating in school reform efforts that can become complex and confusing at times. Youth in this stage of development can readily express their thoughts in an effort to make sense of others’ behaviors. They see that
relationships with others are reciprocal which provides evidence of less egocentric thinking. However, these children still make judgments based upon what is logical and not necessarily what is realistic.

Student involvement in school reform initiatives can allow youth exposure, awareness and understanding of those typically adult-handled school issues. Young participants in Furtwengler's (1991) qualitative study expressed thoughts of trying to make sense of school policy and existing barriers. In this study, interview data were obtained from 17 schools in which middle school and high school students expressed their thoughts regarding their involvement in various school reform efforts. These students found some problems very complicated and difficult to solve. Yet, they reportedly appreciated the opportunity to be actively involved in trying to solve the schools’ more difficult problems.

When participating in SWPBS or other school reforms, adolescents may question double standards. However frustrating this may be for some adults, this experience can assist children in handling a level of disequilibrium as they try to assimilate (fitting stimuli into a schemata or intellectual structures) and accommodate (changing or creating a new schemata to fit the stimulus) new knowledge. Corbett and Wilson (1995) take into consideration the varying levels of disequilibrium and recommend that students be able to “anticipate and experiment with the role change before they are expected to demonstrate results of having made the change” (p. 13). Allowing youth to assimilate and accommodate new experiences should be done with active, rather than passive, involvement in SWPBS.
Cognitive and moral reasoning needs to be taken into account as adults work with youth. Between the ages of 6 to 11 years of age, Erikson (1968) described the psychosocial stage of development: industry versus inferiority to describe the ability of children to develop cooperativeness and willingness to work with others (Berk, 2002). Additionally, Erikson (1968) explained that when children have opportunities to experience positive interactions in their cultural milieu, feelings of incompetence and inferiority can be avoided. Cooperative experiences with adults during school-aged years may assist a child in developing feelings of competency and capability. Beyond the stage of industry versus inferiority, Erikson described the period of adolescent development, identity versus identity confusion, to involve a level of self-reflection and evaluation. During this stage of development, youth may ask questions of themselves relative to their place in society and future goals. Negative experiences at this time can lead to an uncertainty regarding future adult roles and responsibilities (Berk, 2002). Opportunities to experience positive interactions between adults and youth may have encouraging outcomes for youth into adulthood.

Further connections are seen in positive versus negative interactions in a study conducted by Elliot, Witt, Galvin, and Moe (1986) on the acceptability of interventions used in the classroom. In this study, 100 sixth graders participated in two separate experiments involving the completion of surveys and the analysis of case studies of misbehaviors and teacher interventions. Acceptability judgments included sixth graders finding positive group or peer-directed interventions more acceptable than negative reinforcement directed at the group. Negative interventions were more accepted when
directed at individuals. Examples of acceptable rewards included earning extra recess, and corrective actions, such as verbal reprimands for a group when one student was misbehaving, were seen as unfavorable. Elliot and colleagues theorize that these responses were developmentally appropriate as it was determined that students lacked the understanding or ability to make a connection between the interventions selected to consequentially modify the behavior. This observation supports the position that problem-solving and deductive thinking are not well developed in sixth graders.

To further aid students in problem-solving, teachers can act as moral educators (Kohlberg, 1981). As Kohlberg (1981) explained, teachers can find themselves the creators of the “hidden curriculum.” He referred to this hidden curriculum as the moral climate of a classroom. The teacher sets the tone and baseline for this climate. Keeping this in mind, he proposed three stages or levels of moral development: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional morality. In stage two of the pre-conventional morality, exchange of favors, youth may be able to recognize others’ needs as long as their own needs are met (Ormond, 2003). Kohlberg described stage three, which occurs during conventional morality, as the good boy/good girl stage. In this stage, the exchange of reciprocity can evolve into an “imaginative reciprocity” (p. 148) in which youth can apply the golden rule, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” (p. 149). In the fourth stage of moral development, known as the law and order stage, Kohlberg (1981) described the individual need to look to society for guidelines as to what is wrong or right. He viewed the school community to be a reflection of the greater society and “an
institutions with the basic function of maintaining and transmitting some, but not all, of the consensual values of society” (p. 17).

With this in mind, Kohlberg (1981) listed specific things teachers can do in the classroom to help children develop a steadfast system that is in accordance with societal values:

1. Be a good example.
2. Help young people assess conflict situations and gain insight into the development of constructive values and attitudes.
3. Show young people how to make generalizations concerning experience through evaluation and expression of desirable values.
4. Help students acquire an understanding of the importance of values that society considers worthwhile.
5. Aid children to uphold and use positive values when confronted by adverse pressures from peers. (p. 8)

Piaget terms this gainful opportunity of knowledge as “Social-Arbitrary Knowledge” which involves children’s understanding of rules, laws, morals, and values. He proposed that ethics and a language system are constructed from the social interactions with others (Wadsworth, 1979).

**Overview of School-wide Positive Behavioral Supports**

School-Wide Positive Behavioral Supports (SWPBS) is a system approach used to teach positive behaviors to school-aged students. When the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was amended in 1997, Positive Behavioral Supports
(PBS) found a home in the wording and action of the law. PBS is viewed as a valuable behavior strategy as it encourages the use of positive measures to promote functional behavior, rather than aversive techniques such as punishment. Turnbull et al. (2001) refer to IDEA’s promotion of PBS as being a “rebuttable presumption” (p. 14), and PBS must be considered as the intervention of choice before anything else. Not only has PBS found value in the letter of the law to support individual cases, it is now seen to be valuable for all students as a way to prevent problem behavior (Sugai & Horner, 2002).

Interestingly, PBS evolved from the behavioral sciences and the use of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). Over the years, ABA has taken on a negative connotation since it has been associated with the use of aversive techniques (Alberto & Troutman, 2006). The single subject ABA research processes are now generalized to the implementation and data-driven decisions made in PBS. These research processes are applicable to large numbers of students as group designs are used to track targeted behaviors. Generally, this type of single-subject design, that can be applied to a group design, is used in school settings such as the playground, cafeteria, hallways, and transitions (e.g., entering or exiting school) (Colvin, Sugai, Good, & Lee, 1997; De Pry & Sugai, 2002; Lewis, Colvin, & Sugai, 2000; Lewis, Powers, Kelk, & Newcomer, 2002).

In some situations, data were collected in multiple settings, examining common target behaviors across settings (Lewis, Sugai, & Colvin, 1998; Lewis & Garrison-Harrell, 1999). Dependent variables included a variety of observable, measurable, and discrete behaviors such as keeping hands and feet to self, using polite words, staying in line, and using equipment appropriately (Colvin, Sugai, Good, & Lee, 1997; De Pry &
Independent variables include interventions such as pre-corrections (verbal prompts given in advance to remind students of expected behaviors), and adult active supervision (scanning environment, moving around setting, and giving praise or providing corrections to students) (Lewis & Garrison-Harrell, 1999). The ABA procedures and principles used in the process of PBS allow educators to promote positive interventions universally for students with and without disabilities in a variety of settings that may present problematic behaviors.

The intention to prevent problematic behavior is an overall theme that is featured on a continuum that includes intensive individualized, targeted, and school-wide interventions. First, school-wide interventions are used to decrease the number of new problem behavior cases that may occur school-wide and for all students. Universal interventions seek to reinforce a school-wide management system. An example of a universal intervention can include good behavior tickets randomly awarded to students as expected behaviors are exhibited. The same principle of reinforcement can be applied to groups of students, contingent upon the group’s performance of expected behaviors (Murphy, Theodore, Aloiso, Alric-Edwards, & Hughes, 2007). Several SWPBS studies (Colvin & Sugai, 1993; Colvin, Sugai, Good, & Lee, 1997; De Pry & Sugai, 2002; Lewis, Colvin, & Sugai 2000; Lewis, & Garrison-Harrell, 1999; Lewis, Powers, Kelk, & Newcomer, 2002; Lewis, Sugai, & Colvin, 1998; Scott, 2001; Sprague, Walker, Golly, White, Myers, & Shannon, 2001) included the use of these types of large-scale
reinforcement to assist all students, but that only generally assist 80 - 90% of the student population that typically do not have serious behavior problems (Sugai & Horner, 1999).

Next, targeted interventions on the continuum are designed to reduce the number of problem behavior cases extending from students who are at-risk and account for 5 – 15% of the school population. This group may need interventions that can be delivered in small groups, or they may individually share common interventions. Such interventions may include practicing certain social skills as related to expected behaviors (Wheeler & Anderson, 2002). Generally, students whose behaviors deem them to be at-risk may need direct academic and social skill instruction. One such program that equally supports both academic and social instruction is the Proactive, Responsive Empirical, and Proactive Alternatives in Regular Education (PREPARE) that assists teachers and students in identifying procedures or routines that should be taught (Nelson, 1996).

Another program that serves a similar purpose is the Second Step program (Committee for Children, 1997) that focuses on violence-prevention through lessons that target anger management, empathy, and problem-solving (Sprague et al., 2001).

Finally, intense individualized interventions are designed for students who are typically at high risk for emotional, behavioral, health, communication, and academic problems (Freeman, Eber, Anderson, Irvin, Horner, Bounds, & Dunlap, 2006) and account for 1 - 7% of the student population. These interventions are designed to reduce the number of long-standing problems and can involve decreasing maladaptive or increasing adaptive behaviors by intensity, frequency, or duration (Lewis & Sugai, 1999).
Additional supports can be coupled with PBS to assist in providing intensive individualized interventions. For example, through the use of PBS and person-centered planning, defined as programming that focuses on a person’s strengths, abilities, and the unique supports needed to promote inclusion, Kennedy, Long, Jolivette, Cox, Tang, and Thompson (2001) apply the same principles used in single-subject design for three different individuals. The independent variables included the person-centered planning and PBS that encompasses specific interventions for the individuals such as self-monitoring, ignoring, praise, and participation in choice activities. Improvements were seen in selected target behaviors, yet it is not clear which interventions had the most influence on behaviors for each individual as the intention of the study was to use a person-centered programming with PBS. In similar research conducted by Goodall, Groah, Boyer, and Russo (1996), PBS was used with two individuals that had experienced brain injuries. For both individuals, initial baselines were determined using the frequency and duration of behaviors such as leaving the work site, yelling, and picking lint off clothing. With a collaborative, person-centered approach, interventions were chosen, including choice activities (e.g., playing computer games), involvement in recreational activities, and/or reading car magazines. These interventions replaced traditional and ineffective consequences such as verbal reprimand, social rejection, or loss of job. As supported in the literature, Safran and Oswald (2003) indicate that practices used in these studies support the use of positive rather than aversive practices to encourage functional, socially acceptable behavior.
Levels of PBS Interventions

Various levels of intervention exist on the PBS prevention continuum. These levels include school-wide, non-classroom settings (e.g., hallways, cafeteria), classroom settings, and the individual student level. Research demonstrates that interventions used school-wide and in non-classroom settings can be beneficial for all students (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). This may be true to some extent, yet Todd, Horner, Sugai, and Sprague (1999) explain that school-wide measures are not always effective with students who exhibit chronic behavioral problems. The trickle-down effect or “one-size-fits-all” is a misconception even if the implementation of the system is done in an efficient manner and shows positive results. Therefore, other levels of the PBS systems should be considered for implementation by school faculty and staff.

School-wide support level. According to Lewis and Sugai (1999), the school-wide level includes six steps or procedures. In the planning of PBS, a team is formulated representing the school staff and administration. Initially, a needs assessment such as the Effective Behavior Supports Survey (EBS Survey) developed to assist school faculty and staff to evaluate behavior supports systems can be used to begin the process (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). A needs assessment of this type not only helps staff and administration to determine which levels of support are needed, but also provides an opportunity for discourse among school personnel (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). It is essential that commitment be obtained from staff personnel to participate in the SWPBS process and agree to support decisions made in the process (Scott, 2001).
Next, Lewis and Sugai (1991) recommend that a statement of purpose be established that serves as a mission statement. After a mission statement is devised, school-wide rules should be written or reviewed. An example might be “Be kind.” Behavioral expectations articulate in more detail how rules are to be implemented (Oswald, Safran, & Johanson, 2005). An example behavioral expectation might be “I keep hands and feet to myself.” After this, the team establishes procedures for teaching the behavioral expectations.

Todd, Haugen, Anderson, and Spriggs (2002) evaluated the effectiveness of a plan devised by teachers for teaching expected behaviors for recess. A “recess workshop” was planned that included students and teachers practicing recess routines. For example, rehearsal of lining up and returning to class was practiced as well as walking the playground boundaries. This practice is aligned with recommendations by Lewis and Sugai (1999) who deem it necessary to show or model for students what the expected behaviors look like.

Procedures for encouraging preferred behaviors should also be determined. These procedures often include the use of tokens or tickets students earn as they are seen following and using expected behaviors. For example, Taylor-Green et al. (1997) rewarded behavior by distributing “High-five” tickets. Before presenting a student with a ticket, the faculty would verbally state what the student was doing appropriately and then award a ticket. The “High Five” terminology corresponded with the five school rules devised by the faculty. Procedures for discouraging behavior should also be planned ahead. Rule-violation should be associated with a sequence of logical consequences.
Consequences might include the use of detention, an office referral, or a verbal reprimand (Taylor-Green et al., 1997).

Finally, record-keeping procedures that help determine programmatic decisions are established. Often schools choose to access archival data, such as Office Discipline Referrals (ODR), to make data-based decisions about student behavior (Hawkin, MacLeod, & Rawlings, 2007; Ervin et al. 2006; Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997; Taylor-Green et al. 1997; Sprague, Walker, Golly, White, Myers, & Shannon, 2001; Todd, Haugen, Anderson, & Spriggs, 2002; Wright & Dusek, 1998).

Sugai, Sprague, Horner, and Walker, (2000) define ODR as

an event which (a) a student engaged in a behavior that violated a rule or social norm in the school, (b) the problem behavior was observed or identified by a member of the school staff, and (c) the event resulted in a consequence delivered by administrative staff that produced a permanent (written) product defining the whole event. (p. 93)

ODR documentation can help schools determine trends and patterns of where and when problem behaviors are occurring. They can also be used to make comparisons among grade levels, gender, and/or ethnicity. For example, if it were determined through analysis of office discipline referrals that a high rate of referrals were emanating from the playground, then that setting would become the target area for the implementation of SWPBS. Irvin et al (2006) used Messick’s model to evaluate the validity and use of the School-Wide Information System (SWIS). This electronic web-based system is used by school personnel to input and track office discipline referrals. Ultimately, the reports can
be used to monitor behaviors and make data-based decisions in devising plans to improve behavior. Irvin et al.’s. (2006) results showed increased efficiency in initiating constructive decisions made about behavior. More details of this study and the use of SWIS are presented in a following section. However, Lewis-Palmer, Sugai, and Larson (1999) caution that although this method of assessment is time efficient and simple to use, it can be unreliable, because it is an indirect measure of behavior.

*Non-classroom support level.* In comparison, when staff and administration target non-classroom settings (e.g., hallways, cafeteria), the same procedures for SWPBS can be used. Lewis and Sugai (1999) suggest the team examine the features of the physical environment, establish predictable routines, teach appropriate behaviors, and focus on effective use of active supervision. Activities may include: (a) assessment of routines, those needed and in place, identification of staff and student behaviors needed for success, and development of strategies for teaching; (b) assessment of physical characteristics (e.g., the examination of inadequate space for number of students); (c) identification of behaviors that are setting-specific and reflect the school-wide rules; (d) development of teaching strategies, including teaching expected behaviors through the use of social skills training, demonstrations by teachers, and role-plays; (e) identification and securing supports by conducting in-services for teachers and providing consistent training in active supervision strategies. This also includes rearranging or changing the physical environment as needed; and (f) implementation and monitoring that includes setting up a structured schedule, staff review of routines used in settings with students,
holding assemblies to communicate and practice new routines and behaviors, and direct observation of frequency of problem behaviors.

*Classroom supports level.* The third level is classroom supports. Here, more targeted attempts can assist students who demonstrate at-risk behaviors, and class-wide supports are put into place. This system of PBS differs from the first two discussed in that a teacher can fashion the supports as he or she sees fit. Sugai and Horner (1999) recommend that teachers support school-wide rules and behavioral expectations by aligning them with classroom expectations. They also recommend specific implementation activities supported by research-based practices, such as using advanced organizers and pre-corrections, keeping students engaged in learning activities by praising the model, using physical proximity or nonverbal prompts, providing a positive atmosphere by using positive reinforcement that can include the use of a response-cost system, consistently reinforcing rules, and using proactive correction procedures through the use of error correction steps. These steps include bringing the behavior to the students’ attention in a dignified fashion by using privacy, proximity, and eye contact (Curwin & Mendler, 2001), allowing for re-teaching of expected behaviors, and praising on-task behaviors as the student displays appropriate behavior. Finally, Sugai and Horner (1999) suggest teachers should teach and plan for transitions. Such techniques are helpful for all students, especially those who demonstrate at-risk or challenging behaviors. Small group instruction for more in-depth teaching may be necessary for some students. This can include role-plays or demonstrations of expected behaviors by the teacher.
Intensive Individualized Interventions. Sugai and Horner (1999) report 3 - 7% of students identified with chronic behavior problems account for all school referrals. To effectively meet these students’ needs, a team is formed to coordinate services. Freeman et al. (2006) describe that some schools run two teams for SWPBS. One team focuses on school-wide, primary implementation of PBS while another team focuses efforts on secondary and tertiary supports as the depth of services and networking for these students is more intensive. The team should include selected school staff, administration, counselors, and wraparound personnel to work along with the family and student. The level of student participation on the team varies depending upon age and cognitive functioning (Sugai & Horner, 1999). The representation of faculty and staff on the team may differ. Administrative personnel may remain consistent among teams, yet staff involvement can vary depending upon who works individually with the student.

The implementation team is also responsible for the identification of students in need of individualized support. To help with identification, it may be useful to have a general rule of thumb “three incidents and meet” rule (Sugai & Horner, 1999). Therefore, a third office referral would initiate a response for the team to meet. Requests for assistance should also be in place for teachers who have targeted a student in need of additional supports. If the team determines it necessary, a functional behavior assessment (FBA) should be conducted to determine the function of the behavior. Thereafter, a behavior support plan would be devised based upon information gathered from the FBA. Similar to other levels of PBS, the individual is taught more socially-acceptable behaviors. These behaviors have been referred to as “replacement behaviors” that are
reinforced by using schedules of differential reinforcement of compatible behaviors. According to Alberto and Troutman (2003), the purpose is to decrease the inappropriate behavior by replacing it with an appropriate behavior. The last and on-going step is to implement and monitor the plan. Again, as in other levels, this monitoring should be data-driven and can include the use of (ABA) methods to determine if interventions have successfully impacted targeted behaviors. These methods include the collection of baseline and intervention data for the targeted behavior in an effort to increase desired behaviors or decrease maladaptive behaviors.

Assistance to improve the behavior of individual students for a first time referral that leads to the implementation of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), or revision, should trigger the use of PBS. Turnbull and colleagues (2001) report that IDEA views PBS plans created during IEP revisions or implementation serving as the required behavior improvement plan for a child.

Data Collection Procedures Used in SWPBS

To meet the needs of an individual student, assessments administered should generate valuable information. The use of the information gleaned from assessing the student and his or her needs should be followed by subsequent planning. A similar procedure is used in the preliminary planning stages of SWPBS. In some cases, schools or researchers choose to survey school personnel to determine needs or what systems are in place or in need of development. The following has been used in this process of pre-planning.
Effective Behavior Supports Survey

One quantitative measure that can be used in the implementation of SWPBS is to have staff and faculty complete a needs assessment to determine which systems within a school are in most need of improvement. The Effective Behavior Supports Survey (EBS Survey) was developed to assist school faculty and staff to evaluate behavior support systems and can be used to begin the process (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). Items on this assessment are categorized into systems, which include: school-wide, non-classroom settings, classroom, and individual students. Each of these systems list features that are rated under two different criteria that include “current status” and “improvement priority.” An example of a feature under “school-wide systems” is “expected student behaviors are taught directly.” Criteria for current status ratings include “in place, partially in place, and not in place.” Criteria for “improvement priority” are high, medium, or low relative priority.

Safran (2006) analyzed the effectiveness of the EBS survey in three different schools as a tool used to begin the SWPBS process. For total scale internal consistency, Safran found a moderate reliability alpha coefficient of .85 for the current status and a high reliability alpha coefficient of .95 for the improvement priority. However, when subscales were examined, internal consistency lessened to that of .60 for the non-classroom settings subscale and .66 for the individual student subscale. Interestingly, individual student was rated “least in place” under current status, but its rating on improvement priority in comparison to other systems, was lower. Safran advises that
when schools use surveys such as the EBS, they should be used as a tool to lead discussions and decision-making, rather than dictating school practices.

*Office Discipline Referrals*

Another quantitative measure used to determine the needed levels of SWPBS is the use of archival data, such as Office Discipline Referrals (ODR) (Gottfredson, Gottfredson, & Hybl, 1993; Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997; Wright & Dusek, 1998). Using Messick’s Unified Approach and examining previous studies, Irvin, Tobin, Sprague, Sugai, & Vincent (2004) address the construct validity of ODR. Several positive outcomes were determined, supporting the use of ODR. Studies examined teacher perceptions as to whether behaviors were changing, and if so, to what degree. Four out of five schools reported consistency between teachers’ perceptions and the actual number of behavior incidences. In determining durability patterns of ODR, Irvin et al. found studies that supported recidivism in data. They also report that changes in ODR measures were consistent with results from other types of measures, such as direct observation when used in conjunction with ODR. Irvin et al. (2004) recommend that data from ODR be triangulated with other measures used to evaluate SWPBS such as interviews or surveys.

*School-Wide Information System*

Another tool that can lend itself to more reliable data collection is to use computerized, web-based programs that can house and aggregate ODR data for decision-making purposes (Irvin, Horner, Ingram, Todd, Sugai, Sampson, & Boland, 2006). One such instrument used to track ODR is the School-Wide Information System (SWIS). This
web-based management system offers secure data entry and monitoring of ODR on a school-wide level, setting-specific, time-specific, and/or individual basis. Reports and charts are readily available for teams to examine and make data-based decisions (http://www.swis.org).

To address the reliability of SWIS, Irvin et al. (2006) surveyed faculty from elementary and middle schools using the web-based program. Consistent findings were found among participants as Irvin and colleagues asked a series of questions. For example, when addressing how well SWIS ODR data and reports were used for the purpose in which they were designed, about 70% of elementary school ratings ranged from “adequate” to “exceptional,” while 56% of the middle school respondents reported data and reports to be of “adequate use.” When asked about the availability of ODR SWIS data, 90% of elementary and middle school participants responded that reports were “usually available” or “available when-needed.” With these results in mind, Irvin et al. (2006) concluded the usability and availability of ODR data to be useful when making data-based decisions regarding school-wide behaviors.

School-Wide Evaluation Tool

Schools that have been using the system level supports of PBS have found additional ways to assess the overall efficiency of the programs. One way has been through the use of the School-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET; Horner et al., 2004). This tool involves the examination of seven key features through the use of interviews and observations. Some features include whether or not school-wide behavioral expectations are defined, if rewards are provided following expectations, if problem behaviors are
monitored, and if on-going decision-making is taking place. Results relative to interobserver agreement and reliability that met or exceeded the psychometric standards used in the study showed the promising use of SET by most schools as they are assessing SWPBS progress. One limitation that Horner et al. (2004) advised readers to be aware of is that SET is used to assess the primary prevention supports; therefore it is not applicable to secondary or tertiary prevention levels.

SET alone incorporates the use of a variety of data collection methods, such as conducting interviews and examining permanent products that include meeting minutes or behavioral polices. Examining office discipline referrals and using research instruments such as SET can help schools make even more informed decisions regarding the effectiveness of SWPBS (Todd, Haugen, Anderson, & Springs, 2002).

Observations and Interviews

Lewis-Palmer, Sugai, and Larson (1999) describe the use of interviews and observations as additional methods of data collection. Interviews allow for clarification of questions that might otherwise be overlooked in a conventional rating scale. Although interviews do not provide a direct measure of behaviors (Lewis-Palmer et al., 1999), they do give voice to individuals involved in SWPBS. Individuals involved in SWPBS, whether they are teachers or students, can contribute their perspectives and opinions regarding the effectiveness of SWPBS through interviews. Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pagach, and Richardson (2005) explain that qualitative data from interviews can assist in “our understanding of discourses that shape social life in schools and society” (p. 202). When youth or adolescents have the opportunity to contribute their
perspectives, Bogdan and Bilken (1998) recommend group interviews be used, as the social interaction among these individuals can foster more conversation and expansion of questions asked. Patton (2002) points out this advantage as well, yet advises that some individuals who feel their ideas may be contradictory or unrelated may not speak up. He also suggests that focus groups be very well-planned and involve individuals who share similar interests or backgrounds. Additionally, Patton (2002) recommends that debatable issues not be a topic of focus.

In several studies, (Colvin, Sugai, Good, & Lee, 1997; Lewis, Colvin, & Sugai, 2000; Lewis & Garrison-Harrell, 1999; Lewis, Powers, Kelk, & Newcomer, 2002; Lewis, Sugai, & Colvin, 1998) observations were used to gather direct measures of behaviors targeted in specific settings. Settings included cafeterias, recess or playgrounds, hallways or transitions times, and arrival and dismissal. Behaviors observed were keeping hands and feet to oneself; using equipment appropriately on the playground; pushing, shouting, throwing objects during arrival or dismissal times; misuse of food, out of seat, and cutting in line in the cafeteria. Using a multiple-baseline design, frequency counts of behaviors were calculated. This visual display of target behaviors gives teachers and administrators an avenue for potential discourse to ascertain why behaviors are occurring and consider intervention(s) to use that best meet students’ needs. Ideally, this type of data collection also provides an opportunity to determine the effectiveness of selected interventions.
Interventions Used in SWPBS

One essential feature of SWPBS is to determine which intervention(s) fit(s) the needs of students, staff, and faculty. With SWPBS, emphasis is placed on reduced use of punishment and increased opportunities for staff and faculty to teach behavioral expectations to students (Lewis & Garrison-Harrell, 1999). Interventions used to teach expected behaviors include social skills training, group contingency, pre-corrections, corrections, and/or active supervision (Colvin et al., 1997; Kartub, Taylor-Green, March, & Horner, 2000; Lewis et al., 1998; Lewis et al., 2000; Lewis et al., 2002; Lewis & Garrison-Harrell, 1999). Findings from these studies led to several important implications and considerations for the implementation of SWPBS. First, active supervision was defined as staff looking, moving, and interacting with students. The number of staff available for active supervision seemed to have little effect on the frequency of problem behavior as compared to the activity level of supervision used (Colvin et al., 1997). Therefore, effective active supervision has more of an impact on reducing problem behavior compared to when adults were in the vicinity and not actively scanning or moving around.

Second, time was allocated to teach students expected behaviors. For example, in the Lewis et al. (2002) study, students were taught a problem-solving process that included teaching rules, routines, and behaviors expected of students while at recess. In another study (Kartub et al., 2000), active supervision was used in conjunction with the delivery of pre-corrections and corrections for students in hallway transitions as they were trained to watch for a light placed in the hallway that indicated when they had
exceeded a predetermined volume. Specifically, any noise level below 70 decibels was considered acceptable. Third, social skills should be taught in conjunction with the use of direct instruction. Lewis, Sugai, and Colvin (1998) determined that direct instruction of social skills taught in the actual environment in which they are to be used resulted in students being more apt to remember and generalize the skills.

Time should also be provided for teachers to learn how to use and implement interventions. In a Colvin et al. (1997) study, three playground monitors were trained to use active supervision and pre-correction methods. Playground monitors were educational aides, but implications in this study can be generalized to active supervision used with any staff or faculty member. Each playground monitor was asked to reinforce rule compliance, use correction procedures for any rule violation, physically move around, and visually scan the playground. Teachers were also teaching expected behaviors and using pre-correction with students prior to recess.

With the use of more productive patterns of supervision and teaching expected behaviors, results from direct observation of targeted behaviors indicated an overall decrease in rates of problem behavior. Playground monitors were also observed and data were graphed based upon target behaviors. Specifically, active supervision behaviors included moving around, interacting with students, while non-active supervision behaviors included gesturing or whistling. Interestingly, no apparent differences were seen between baseline and intervention phases regarding an increase in monitored behavior. Yet, after examining these data, the monitors’ quality of active supervision increased. For example, they were seen moving around at wider distances.
Two important implications can be drawn from these findings. First, adults can be taught to learn or perfect an effective intervention. Second, direct observation of discrete behaviors provides a single viewpoint and can cause tunnel vision for researchers who are looking for answers. The use of other methods, such as examining anecdotal records, serves to widen the perspective of a researcher. If time is spent perfecting teachers’ use of interventions, time should also be provided for teachers to determine effective ways to assess these interventions, allowing for more productive involvement of staff, faculty, and students in the SWPBS process.

SWPBS with Active Student Involvement

How can a PBS plan be implemented that insures an equal partnership between school personnel and students? Currently, the literature holds few examples of active student involvement in the SWPBS process. Traditionally, when implementing SWPBS, students are part of the implementation stage. Often they are only included as the subjects or participants in the process, especially if there are intentions of research outcomes. This is evident in research on all levels of PBS implementation (De Pry & Sugai, 2002; Kennedy et al., 2001; Lewis et al., 2002; Molina et al., 2005). Students are introduced to pre-planned rules and behavioral expectations and are instructed in these behaviors. Students may participate in such activities as making posters or writing essays that describe the use of school rules (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). In one study conducted by Molina et al. (2005), students were actual stakeholders when they, along with teachers, completed questionnaires to determine consumer satisfaction. However, only 44% of the students reported they wanted to continue the program into the next year, leading the
authors to conclude that “greater efforts might be needed to achieve student acceptance of the program.” Unfortunately, in the study, yearly, on-going meetings were held to improve and make changes without the involvement of students.

A pattern of lack of student involvement is not limited to one level of support. When implementing school-wide, setting specific, classroom, or individual levels of support, the same pattern is evidenced by superficial, peripheral student involvement. However, involvement on the individual level may be more substantial. Heimeman et al. (2005) alludes to student participation at the student level by communicating that support teams can include the student, if appropriate.

A more common pattern is seen in PBS at the individual level for students with more chronic, severe behavior in which no mention of student involvement is made until the implementation period. The involvement often consists of having the student self-monitor behaviors (Kennedy et al., 2001) and sign contracts of agreement (Goodall et al., 1996). With the recent infusion of wraparound services and PBS, students are involved early on in the process (Eber, 2001; Eber, Sugai, Smith, & Scott, 2002). This initial involvement in the planning stage involves the individual student, family, counselor, and school staff.

Why does this general lack of student involvement exist in SWPBS initiatives? The answer may lie in the issue of treatment fidelity and a need to have verifiable results (Corbett & Wilson, 1995). Another possible reason for a lack of student involvement is that it requires considerable change in the school reform processes currently used, including those that involve the collection of empirical research data. Corbett and Wilson
also suggest that one well-known best practice of constructivism is used in a learning environment for academic instruction, but not used when teaching students expected behavior. Yet, another reason given for the lack of involvement is that many adult educators perceive students as subordinate. The authors recommend that a more equal status exist between adults and students. This recommendation was applied in the current study, where students, as well as staff, were able to pinpoint areas of improvement based upon data and determine proactive interventions, leading to the implementation of a plan to review, repost, reteach, and positively reinforce school-wide rules.

Muncey and McQuillan (1991) found in their ethnographic studies that in some cases, teachers felt that they could “lose control” and power would “shift away” from them if administration allowed student input into faculty decisions. In another case, students were only involved in selected activities and an attempt was made to convince the students they were being involved in important decision-making matters. Muncey and McQuillan also address the issue of empowerment as “gift giving.” Their case studies revealed a perception that empowerment was bestowed upon the students by the faculty leading the students to feel patronized and misled by staff and administration.

Planning for SWPBS with Student Involvement

Current literature lacks examples of active student involvement in SWPBS. Moving forward from where the current literature leaves off, the following depicts a plan to use when implementing SWPBS at the middle school level that actively involves students. Initially, the first stage includes assessment and planning. It is important to start the first phase at the beginning of the school year (Molina et al., 2005; Sugai & Lewis,
Second, selected staff and students would join a team. Since most schools have student council members, this group could serve as the student representation. During this time, staff and students can use Office Discipline Referrals (ODR) to determine areas of need as these data can be visually depicted in a histogram (Lewis-Palmer, Sugai, & Larson 1999). Lewis-Palmer et al. explain that decisions can be made to begin a new program, continue program development, modify aspects of a program, or terminate an ineffective program. Since Lewis-Palmer, Sugai, & Larson (1999) used universal supports in this study that were applicable school-wide, ODR data included the examination of the number of school-wide referrals reported. ODR were used to look at when and where referrals took place, such as non-classroom locations and the type of behavioral infractions that were occurring. After identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the behavior management procedures currently used in the school, the team would determine targeted areas for improvement and change. This may be done by using a survey, such as the EBS survey (Lewis & Sugai, 1999), in which school personnel and students examine the systems already in place and determine improvement priorities. Again, caution should be used as Safran (2006) advises this tool be used to generate discussion and not dictate results. Grover (2004) encourages that students be involved in such research processes as historically, “the child research participant provides no input to the aforementioned issues and is not heard and often not even debriefed after the study” (p. 83-84). Furthermore, discussion among faculty and students may lead to the revisions of school rules by identifying replacement behaviors or pinpointing problem behaviors (Sugai & Lewis, 1999).
The next phase requires the team to determine procedures needed for teaching expected behaviors. Lewis, Sugai, and Colvin (1998) share a description of social skill instruction being used to teach expected behaviors. Time set aside in homeroom was used to review expected behaviors for a specific setting (e.g., the cafeteria). Demonstrations by teachers and role-plays were conducted as well as the integration of the skills and rules into the curriculum. This was accomplished by having students write stories that incorporated the school rules and expectations. This example from the literature does not lend itself to full student involvement in the process since students were “instructed by teachers.” However, if students were involved in the planning and implementation of these activities, along with the teachers, results might have been even more promising. In this study, Lewis, Sugai, and Colvin (1998) used interventions that were applicable, universally to all students, allowing all students to benefit from the impact of the program.

The third phase involves determining procedures for encouraging behaviors. The students on the team would have a sense as to what may be motivating for the student body. Ideas may include students earning tickets for a lottery of prizes to be given at a later date. Monthly school assemblies could be planned to update students and staff on progress. In addition to these ideas, Todd, Horner, Sugai, and Sprague (1999) discuss how school faculty recognized on-task behaviors, individually and school-wide. “Self-manager days” were planned and ceremonies were held during school assemblies to recognize students who were able to self-manage their behaviors. Students were awarded stickers and certificates of recognition. It is unclear if students were included in the
planning of the procedures used to encourage behaviors. Additionally, this would allow students to be active, collaborative members in the process and not be completely dictated to by adult ideas, preconceived notions, and plans that are thought to be in the best interest of the students (Grover, 2004).

In the fourth phase, the team decides on procedures for discouraging inappropriate or problem behaviors. Again, with input from the students on the team, a plan can be devised that involves a system based upon levels of consequence relative to the severity of the behavioral infraction. In traditional SWPBS, rules and behavioral expectations are complemented by positive, proactive interventions. It is understandable that in some cases, corrective measures will still need to be used. For example, Molina et al. (2005) had school faculty determine how rules are commonly violated and include specific consequences that could result. These included verbal corrections and office referrals that might result in detentions and in- or out-of-school suspensions. In Molina’s study of SWPBS, student involvement was not included. Goldman and Newman (1993) recommend that when students are involved in such process change or decisions, they may feel less disconnected. This disconnectedness seems to be the root or source of disruptive behavior, especially at the secondary level.

Next, the team should plan necessary procedures for staff involvement and behaviors. Input from the students would be invaluable at this step since they see what works effectively, which often includes increasing the use of positive praise, or posting and making use of rules in the classrooms. Ethically, SWPBS promotes the dignity of the students by using proactive means of discipline and teaching expected behaviors.
Literature focusing on SWPBS does not typically include students generating rules for teachers. However, this concept is not uncommon, as Carson (1998) describes judicious discipline as a model that incorporates a reciprocal relationship between teacher and student by collaboratively establishing rules and professional ethics. For example, one statement includes, “When papers are displayed, we [students] would like to have all class members’ papers displayed, not just a few” (p. 7).

In the sixth phase, the team determines a data collection process that should include the use of a web-based data collection system, such as SWIS, that can be used to track ODR. Students and staff can examine ODR data to determine trends or patterns that drive decisions to continue or change interventions. Horner, Sugai, and Todd (2001) propose the examination of these data can help the team pinpoint problems with minimal effort, possibly having major effects leading to improvements in school discipline. Surveys, questionnaires, or interviews can also be used to determine consumer satisfaction. For example, in addition to viewing archival data and examining school policies and curricula, the School-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET) involves interviewing individuals (e.g., teachers, administrators, and/or students) to determine the effectiveness of SWPBS (Horner et al., 2004).

Soliciting student input to determine program effectiveness stops short of active student involvement. Furtwengler (1996) recommends that students be involved in all steps of the process, including data collection. He advises that selected student leaders be actively involved with school personnel in the collection and analysis of data to make data-based decisions. Interactions between teachers and students establish a reciprocal
dialogue. Furtwengler (1991) posits that opportunities for student participation can lead to an increased sense of control over their environment as they actively participate in dialogue with teachers. He specifically states, “…the students believe they can make their environment more predictable. Therefore, the need to fight for control is less necessary from the students’ point of view” (p. 9).

As seen in the literature, levels of student involvement in school reform initiatives can vary. One reason these variations in the degree and complexity of student involvement in school reform may occur can be due to the different developmental levels of school-aged students. After the examination of SWPBS and its strong connection with evidence-based practices, it is very evident that student involvement remains a peripheral, component relative to the desired outcomes. This can also be directly related to the need for strict confidentiality measures followed as SWPBS also identifies students who need more targeted or intense interventions.

The current study obtained research-based results through a triangulation of interviews, observations, and archival ODR data to answer specific questions that included: What unique factors must be considered when adding student involvement in SWPBS? What are the positive and negative outcomes of student involvement in SWPBS? What is the effectiveness of student and adult developed interventions? Answering these questions broadened the horizon for active student involvement in school initiatives such as SWPBS.
CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

To attend to the lack of student involvement in SWPBS as reflected in the literature, a mixed-methods investigation was conducted. This study was designed to answer the following questions: What is the current level of student involvement in the SWPBS process? What unique factors must be considered when adding student involvement in SWPBS? What are the positive and negative outcomes of student involvement in SWPBS? Additionally, it addressed which interventions are most effective and contribute to improvement in school-wide behavior, specific targeted behaviors.

This investigation utilized phenomenological inquiry to obtain and elucidate student perspectives regarding their involvement in SWPBS. This chapter begins with a description of the conceptual context in which the student perspectives gained from interviews were analyzed for common themes and unique features to better understand how and why student involvement in SWPBS is necessary. To provide for triangulation of the data, observations were conducted. Observations took place during teacher and student SWPBS meetings. The qualitative data was complemented and corroborated with quantitative data.

This chapter addresses the quantitative analysis that included the examination of office discipline referrals (ODR) in making data-based decisions made by the SWPBS team to targeted specific problem behaviors (i.e., bullying defined as harassment, teasing and taunting). In addition to ODR used in the pre-analysis, data were used to conduct a
post-assessment analysis focused on the specific targeted behavior of bullying.

Student involvement was initiated at the beginning of the last nine-week grading period at the intervention school. Therefore, ODR specific to bullying incidents were examined and compared during the third and fourth nine-week grading periods. Comparisons were also made between the intervention and control schools in regard to ODR bullying incidents.

Following the description of a conceptual framework, this chapter describes the selection of intervention and control school sites, gaining entry into the schools, a description and selection of participants, data collection procedures that include a comparison of SET scores as well as ODR data, interviews, and observations, and ends with a description of data collection methods.

Mixed-Method Approach

The phenomena of involving students in traditional adult decision-making situations were investigated using a mixed-method approach. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) explain that researchers need to be fully acquainted with multiple methods as one method can complement another. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie view research as becoming increasingly dynamic and multifaceted, which requires researchers to balance the use of one method of research with another. They describe various combinations of mixed-methods that can include a researcher operating within a more dominant paradigm, concurrently using methods, or alternating quantitative and qualitative methods in stages.

The current study used quantitative and qualitative methods concurrently to investigate and assess the effectiveness of SWPBS. Quantitative measures were used in
the collection of office referral data to determine trends and patterns in school-wide problematic behavior. Lewis-Palmer, Sugai, and Larson (1999) describe the use of archival data, such as Office Discipline Referrals, to guide data-based decisions and evaluate SWPBS program effectiveness. The collection of Office Referral Data is gathered with relative ease and is efficient in determining where and when disruptive behavior is occurring. Computerized systems are being used in some schools that involve a mainframe database which houses all office discipline referrals (Irvin et al., 2006). Data-based systems can be customized and conform to a district’s policy on discipline. Systems such as these can provide readily available information regarding referrals (Skiba et al., 1997). One web-based system gaining national attention is the School-Wide Information System (SWIS; www.swis.org). This system can aggregate or organize office discipline referrals, allowing school personnel to quickly and efficiently examine patterns and trends in behaviors. This type of system is very helpful for schools that struggle with inconsistencies in existing referral systems (Tobin & Sugai, 2000).

In the current study, the school used FileMaker (www.filemaker.com/products/fmp/) which is comparable to SWIS and provided recommended features of SWIS, including reports of ODR specific to non-classroom locations, time of ODR, behavioral infractions, and consequences of referrals (www.swis.org). The FileMaker database program is similar to SWIS and has been found to be an accurate and fast way to manage ODR data. There was some discussion about the principal’s interest in purchasing SWIS as this is the web-based system recommended and most often used by school districts that follow SWPBS procedures.
However, school finances were very limited and it made sense to work with the system that was currently being used.

Early in the investigation, the researcher, with the help from the secretary, further aligned the FileMaker program used by the school to monitor and report ODR with SWIS. Therefore, drop-down menus for motivation, location, and time were added. Changes made in the FileMaker system were also made on the school ODR form. To assure the ODR data collected during the first half of the school year were accurately represented, the researcher took hard copies of all referrals and cross-checked each one with the system. It was at this time the researcher added location and time, as well as made other corrections (e.g., reentering first and last names that were previously entered out of order). After checking each hard copy referral with the system, the researcher went through the FileMaker system to make sure each electronic ODR had corresponding paper copies. At that time, it was discovered that approximately six or seven ODR entered into FileMaker were missing a hard copy. Each of these were printed and sorted according to student name. Finally, the number of hard copy ODR and those in FileMaker were counted to assure an overall number-match.

As there are benefits to the use of discipline referral data, there are also concerns. The collection of archival data can be unreliable and provide indirect measures of behavior (Lewis-Palmer, Sugai, & Larson, 1999) since these data lack the broader, more detailed focus that qualitative data collection methods offer (Bogdan & Lutiyya, 1992). McPhail (1995) questions the appropriateness of using quantitative research methods in isolation. Further, McPhail explains that the adoption of a positivistic model used in
isolation can lead to the misinterpretation of the lives of the individuals under study. Therefore, in the current study, participant observation was triangulated with interviews and ODR data to confirm findings. A quantitative measure frequently utilized in PBS studies, direct observation of targeted behaviors, was not implemented in this study, since it was possible for the indirect analysis of bullying incidents to be triangulated with qualitative data. Direct observation applies the principles of ABA as behaviors are identified and targeted through observation in pre- and post-analysis often calculated with inter-observer agreement (Cushing, Horner, & Barrier, 2003)

This study used a phenomenological method of qualitative inquiry in conjunction with quantitative methods. Bogdan and Lutiyya (1992) explain that qualitative research evolved from the phenomenological theoretical perspective in an attempt to understand what people do on a daily basis as a product of how they define their world or social milieu. Patton (2002) describes phenomenology as making sense of how humans experience and transform their own experiences into consciousness.

Making meaning of the world can be done individually or collectively in groups. However it may occur, phenomenology takes a deep look into how people may perceive, describe, feel, judge, or remember phenomena. Patton (2002) provides two implications for researchers choosing to use a phenomenological approach. First, he explains that the researcher needs to have a good understanding of the subject matter or the issues relative to the experiences of those involved. Second, an essential component of phenomenology requires researchers to gain a thorough understanding of what individuals are experiencing by being involved in the experience themselves. He quotes Husserl who
said, “We can only know what we experience” (p. 105). Bogdan and Biklen (1998) suggest that phenomenology begins with a level of silence and thoughtfulness to understand how and what meaning is being constructed around events in the participants’ lives.

To delve deeper into an awareness and understanding of what and how students perceive their level of involvement in SWPBS, this study used phenomenology. Data were collected through interviews and observations of students, as they were actively involved in SWPBS. The use of interviews and observations allowed the researcher to triangulate data to better understand events and phenomena experienced by participants. This required the researcher to take an active role in the research to best illuminate those experiences and better understand the phenomena under study. Patton (2002) explains that researchers should have a level of empathic neutrality that identifies a common ground between being too involved and clouding one’s judgment, and remaining too distant that can cause a lack of understanding. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) reiterate this view by explaining that this inductive process does not involve researchers attempting to prove or disprove a theory. Rather, it is an attempt to develop a theory or understanding as they move through the investigation. Patton says, “The neutral investigator enters into the research with no axe to grind, no theory to prove and no predetermined judgments” (p. 106).

As suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (1998), the issue of objectivity was further addressed by spending ample time in the setting with the subjects, consistently confronting opinions and judgments. To obtain knowledge was the goal, not to be
judgmental and to record every detail using field notes. Creswell (1998) recommends that a researcher who is interviewing individuals should suspend all judgments about what is real. As in the words of Husserl, Creswell explains that this deferment is an epoche and can be accomplished by bracketing preconceptions and developing themes in anecdotal recordings until they are founded on more certain grounds.

Another typical concern with phenomenological research is addressing generalization of the results. As Bogdan and Biklen (1998) recommend, the researcher would not want to imply that a particular sample is generalizable to other samples. Rather, they encourage the researcher to see commonalities between similar settings and subjects, based upon the assumption that human behavior is not random. If reliability is of concern, Bogdan and Biklen suggest that qualitative researchers are more focused on obtaining accuracy and comprehensive data. Specific to phenomenology, Kvale (1996) proposes that this type of inquiry involves elucidating what appears and how it appears that should be described in detail in relation to the content and structure of the person’s consciousness. Kvale recommends an “investigation of essence,” encouraging the researcher not to look at phenomena as separate entities, but rather to seek out the common meaning that these experiences may bring.

Phenomenological inquiry was used in this study in order to fully understand the factors or aspects that contribute to the involvement or lack of involvement of students in SWPBS. This approach allowed the researcher to focus on the central issue of student involvement and determine the students’ perception of involvement, how they experience, live, and exemplify the phenomena. Bogdan and Bilken (1998) explain that
data collection and further analysis can reveal complex factors that may exist, socially, culturally, and linguistically that the quantitative data will not solely illuminate. It is through the interpretation of the phenomena that meaning can be established since, according to Bogdan and Bilken, (1998) reality is socially constructed. Detailed notes and records provided an interpretation of reality, serving to elucidate and inform stakeholders of the current status of student involvement in school reform.

The purpose of this research was to delve into and explore the experiences and perceptions of students, as they were actively involved in SWPBS. The group of student participants was representative of the student body, and ODR data, specific to bullying, provided a global reflection of how the entire student body may have responded to interventions. To further corroborate and triangulate data, the perspectives and attitudes of adults were also explored relative to student involvement. Thus the central research question was: “What are the experiences of students actively involved in SWPBS?” This central question guided the selection of sub-questions and permitted flexibility for students providing accounts and perceptions of their involvement. Sub-questions include: Describe any recent changes that occurred. What are your thoughts about these changes? How do you think your involvement and input is valued by your teachers and principal? Kvale (1996) recommends the use of structuring questions that keep the focus on the theme or interpreting questions that are used for clarification. Therefore, this series of questions was changed or modified, and additional questions incorporated as necessary.
Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was based upon existing literature regarding student involvement in SWPBS and other school initiatives. In order to examine student involvement in SWPBS, this investigation first explored the general involvement of students in various school reform initiatives. This was due to the fact that most of the available literature on student involvement was outside that of SWPBS. Also, the level of active student involvement in SWPBS is limited. Traditional involvement was found in the implementation stage of SWPBS as students’ behaviors are most often viewed as dependent variables. This led to the exploration of literature outside that of SWPBS into other initiatives of school reform that included student participation.

This phenomenological study unfolded the “unintentionality of consciousness” (Creswell, 1998, p. 55) based upon memory, representation, and deductions developed by students via their experiences or lack of experiences in SWPBS. This combination of qualitative and quantitative inquiry generated useful and interesting results while examining the phenomena of student involvement in SWPBS. According to Bogdan and Lutfiyya (1992), quantitative and qualitative methods do not need to be used in a competitive manner. They propose situations in which researchers use qualitative inquiry in the beginning of research to glean pilot data. Rather than being limited to using qualitative results in a preliminary fashion, this study used both methods of inquiry to complement each other. This was done by using what Johnson and Onwueguzie (2004) recommend as “bringing together the deductive results obtained through qualitative research concurrently with the inductive results gleaned from the quantitative inquiry to
acquire abduction of results that rely on a set of rationalizations for discerning results” (p. 17). They explain, “researchers should collect multiple data using different strategies, approaches, and methods in such a way that the resulting mixture or combination is likely to result in complementary strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses” (p. 18).

As recommended by Patton, (2002) phenomenological reflection is retrospective in the sense that experiences are recalled directly from lived experiences. An individual’s ability to accurately retell experiences may pose a limitation. With this in mind, accounts from multiple people regarding the same phenomena assists in deciphering experiences. As themes unravel and emerge, the researcher examined what was experienced by students based upon their level of involvement in SWPBS. Descriptions of experience came from the students’ interaction with the phenomena as they described it. Patton identifies the what as representing descriptions of experiences, while the how is the interpretation of those experiences. In this research, experiences retold by students allowed the researcher to make sense of how the experiences were transformed into consciousness. This was accomplished through taking detailed notes and conducting in-depth interviews that, according to Patton (2002), “capture and describe how people perceive, describe, feel, judge, remember, make sense, and talk about it with others” (p. 104).

In this study, the researcher deductively examined data from in-depth interviews and observations. Analysis of results included comparisons between yearly totals of ODR, totals of ODR in specific school settings (i.e., hallways, lunchroom, and recess), and specific data for incidences of bullying (defined in this study as
harassment/taunting/teasing). Data included dependent measures collected based upon targeted interventions selected by students and staff. Similarly, the same questions of how and what, used in the deductive fashion, were used in an inductive fashion to discover and explore the experiences and perceptions of those students who were actively involved in SWPBS.

Subsequently, in this phenomenological inquiry, the next step was to develop a central research question. As recommended by Creswell (1998), the overarching question should be accompanied by a number of sub-questions. The central, overarching question ought to be emergent and flexible as it answers the what and how. For example, when comparing first and second half yearly totals of ODR occurring in specific locations or for frequency of behavioral infractions, the question of how focused on student and staff interpretations regarding interventions used and problematic behaviors. As for the question of what, participants commented on what were probable causes as to why behavioral infractions decreased, increased, or remained consistent.

**Procedures**

**Research Site**

This research was conducted at two schools located in a rural area of southeastern Ohio. Based upon the 2006 census information, the county housing the schools has a population of about 2,471 people (http://www.citydata.com/township/[countyname].html). Both schools serve students from fourth to eighth grade. The choice of this age and grade level allowed the researcher to focus on the cognitive and moral development of students ranging in age from 10 to 14
years. The control school served over 700 students in grades kindergarten through 8th grade and the intervention school a little over 100. For purposes of this study, ODR from both schools were compared in a pre- and post-analysis for the 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. Rationale for choosing the control school was that it was in the same district as the intervention school allowing for similarities in demographics, and controlling for things like socioeconomic status and other factors that might impact willingness to report bullying. The control school had also received PBS training the previous year. Due to funding issues, a more recent development to take place at the start of the 2008-09 school year would be the closing of two schools within the district, including the intervention school.

This school district was nestled in a rural area that required students to be bused from several miles away. Generally, the student population reflected the Appalachian culture as relative to the community. Racial groups included about 97% Caucasian, 0.4% African American, 0.2% Native American, 0.1% Asian, and 1.1% two or more races (www.firstohio.com/maps/map). The students’ families had varying incomes, falling into the middle to lower income brackets, in addition to being at or below the national poverty level. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the town the intervention school is located in reported an employment rate of 63.3%. The median household income was $14,539, with 17% of the population on public assistance. In this rural town, 21.1% of families were below the poverty level, with families with children under 18 years of age being more likely to be below the poverty level. Of the 115 students attending the intervention
school during the 2007-2008 school year, 58 received free and reduced lunch, which was slightly more than 50% of the student population.

In comparison, the control school reported 18% of the student population receiving free and reduced lunch. The school had Title I eligibility, but not school-wide as compared to the intervention school that had School-wide Title I eligibility.

Based upon the Ohio Department of Education’s data, the intervention school’s annual report card reported that of the 115 students enrolled in the 2007-2008 school year, 15.5% were students identified as having received special education services. This information also reported that 50.4% of the student population was economically disadvantaged. In comparison, the control school had 13.4% of students identified as receiving special education services and 19% of the students were considered economically disadvantaged (http://www.ode.state.oh.us/reportcardfiles/2007-2008/BUILD/001651.pdf).

Both schools were active in the use of SWPBS as a component of their overall school improvement plan. However, for purposes of this study, only the intervention school had the variable of student involvement added to their SWPBS plan. Furthermore, SET scores were scheduled to be obtained from both intervention and control schools to determine comparability of the two schools’ current status of SWPBS. The SET assessment was conducted at the intervention school and served as useful information for the researcher to understand the current status of SWPBS. However, even after numerous attempts to obtain SET scores from the control school, this information was not made available to the researcher.
Both schools tracked the number of times students were required to sign the “accountability” book kept in the office. This was used when a student’s behavior did not warrant a referral to the principal, but tracked reminders given before a referral would occur. It also allowed the principal to monitor these students in a proactive sense.

“Very Important Person” (VIP) booklets were kept in both school offices. Students were instructed to sign the booklet when an adult observed a student following school rules or behaving in a responsible fashion. This procedure included an adult recognizing a student’s on-task behavior and recommending that they sign the VIP book. Further recognition was given at times during the school year for students who signed the VIP book. The accountability and VIP books were components adapted from the Noah Salzman (2007) program that complemented SWPBS as it provided a level of consequences when students challenged rules after proactive measures were tried.

*Gaining Entry*

The nature of this study required the researcher to gain entry into a middle school interested in continued development of SWPBS with the addition of active student involvement. After consultation with a colleague engaged in a state-wide review of schools engaged in the use of SWPBS, two potential schools were selected that were matched for district, geographical location, socio-economic status, and current use of SWPBS. An essential criterion was that both schools had used SWPBS for at least two years and had participated in SWPBS training provided by their local regional resource service center. Additionally, both schools served students in fourth through eighth grade.
In late September, the researcher contacted the schools to present the proposed research endeavor. The researcher gained permission from the school district superintendent to conduct the study. After gaining the superintendent’s consent, the researcher contacted principals from both intervention and control schools to obtain permission.

After obtaining support from the superintendent and principal, the researcher had a conversation with the principal of the intervention school regarding teacher commitment. Since a SWPBS team did not meet on a regular basis, establishing teacher support would be a challenge. This was the principal’s first year at the school and turnover in administration had consistently occurred over the past five years. Under these circumstances, a lack of consistency existed in procedures used school-wide to encourage appropriate behavior. The principal thought it was crucial that teachers and faculty be involved in the initiative and was willing to ask specific individuals to regularly participate. She recommended that certain individuals be on the team, including the counselor, principal, lead teacher, union representative, and secretary.

Gaining commitment is an essential factor in the development of school improvement plans. Without ample commitment, there may be little movement to obtain a vision of active student involvement (Goldman & Newman, 1998). Reciprocity was established as students and adults saw ultimate benefit with the outcome of active student involvement. Patton (2002) describes reciprocity as “an exchange relationship” built on conviction, respect, and cooperation. This required the phenomenological-driven researcher to spend an ample amount of quality time with the staff, administration, and
students. Time spent in the field allowed a rapport to develop between the researcher and participants in the program. Based upon recommendations from Creswell (1998), it is very valuable to determine who participants will be since they should be easily accessible. In this study, the researcher quickly determined the principal and secretary to be the individuals invaluable to the study. Written permission or informed consent following approval of the Institutional Review Board was not able to be obtained until early December, delaying the in-depth interviews and observations of students and adults in the study.

**Adult Participants**

Adult participants in this study included eight teachers who taught grades four through eight, the school principal, secretary, substitute secretary, counselor, Title I instructor (responsible for remedial instruction in reading), special educator, librarian, and school aide. All adult participants were Caucasian and 15 of the 16 were females, with the exception of one 6 - 8th grade math teacher. Demographic data indicated that teachers and other licensed faculty had from 5 to 25 years of teaching experience. The involvement of the adults was imperative to further determine their perspectives on active student involvement.

**Selection of Student Participants**

Representative sampling was used to identify individuals who had direct experience with the phenomena under investigation (Creswell, 1998). Staff and/or administrators were consulted to determine which students they recommended. Criteria included the selection of student leaders. Furtwengler (1991) reported that the
contributions of students seen as leaders selected in school improvement initiatives appeared to be an essential characteristic in improvement efforts. For purposes of this study, the sample included the selection of at-risk students and/or those students seen as potential leaders. At-risk students can benefit in multiple ways from involvement in SWPBS. Goldman and Newman (1993) used the same criteria in selection of students as they relied upon staff recommendations. Therefore, selection of students in this study involved teachers and principal recommendations.

Using representative sampling, teachers recommended three students from each grade level, with at least one female and male from each grade (four through eight), for a total of 15 students. Gender representation was fairly even, with seven girls and eight boys. Thirteen students were caucasian, and two students were bi-racial. Using representative selection allowed teachers to choose students who were viewed as role-models, potential leaders, and students who were at-risk either academically and/or behaviorally. The principal provided a members check to further clarify that the sample was representative of the student population. The intervention school and one other neighboring school in the district served students who were generally from lower socioeconomic levels as 7.7% of the residents earned an income below the national poverty level in 1999 (http://www.city-data.com/township/...html).

Furtwengler (1991) explains that student involvement encourages and strengthens students’ feelings of belonging, control over outcomes and actions, and a sense of unity in the school community. This supports Glasser’s views that basic needs such as fun, power, freedom, and belonging are sufficiently met when students are empowered
through their involvement (Goldman & Newman, 1998). Staff and faculty can also benefit as Goldman and Newman found that teachers and students can generally share similar goals and aspirations related to the future of their school.

_THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT_

During an initial visit, the principal gave the researcher a tour of the school. At one time, the school served grades kindergarten through 12. The school consisted of a first floor level where the gymnasium was located. Near the gymnasium, to the right of the first stairwell were the girls’ and boys’ restrooms. Also, in this area were old trophies, photos, and sports-related memorabilia. Turning left down the hall, a furnace room was situated on the right, followed by the cafeteria. Between the furnace room and cafeteria, another stairwell led down to the first level and back up to the second and third floors.

The cafeteria was a long and narrow room that served as a multi-purpose room where after school activities were generally held. Windows in the cafeteria lined the front of the building and gave view to a rural state route. At the far right end of the cafeteria, shelves and cabinets lined the wall with a teacher’s desk off to the side. The principal explained that art classes were also held here. Art programming in the district has not been eliminated. However, physical education programs have been eliminated, requiring the classroom teachers to teach physical education.

Across the hall from the end of the cafeteria was the library which also served as the computer lab. On one side of the room, a large selection of about 40 computers lined long tables. On the opposite side of the room, a limited number of books and shelves
could be seen. Above the bookshelves, a line of windows, similar to those in the cafeteria, were open as a gentle warm breeze floated in. Peering out these windows, a small grove of trees could be seen, which stood with a concrete bench nearby. Beyond this area and down a hill were a modest playground and an open field to the right. Out of view on the other side of the building were located basketball courts. An exit door from the library led to the small grove of trees and down to the playground. Another exit was situated off the back of the gymnasium and led to a parking lot and down to the field next to the playground. The section of the school that included the cafeteria and library was added on to the building and not part of the original structure.

As the principal walked the researcher around the building, students were friendly, curious, and excited to see a visitor. Students were addressed by first name by the principal as the principal showed a sincere interest in all the students. The second level of the building was similar to the third, except the office was on the second floor. When viewing the building from the front, the cafeteria was on the far left end, with two separate sets of steps on either end of the main part of the building. The steps to the right led directly to the office on the second floor. The office was small with a few chairs for visitors, a desk for the secretary, a copier, and a small counter that appeared to be a work station with a paper cutter available for teacher use. The principal had a small private office with a tiny bathroom off to the right.

Each floor contained three large classrooms that held approximately 20 to 25 student desks. The chalkboards were the original chalkboards, as well as wooden floors that creaked when walked on. Worn carpeting lined the hallway floors and they creaked
when walked on. Most walls did not appear to be freshly painted, and in some places the paint was pealing or chipping. Ceilings were high, and exposed old pipes were painted the same color as the walls. Lockers lined the back wall of the second floor. Grades six, seven, and eight were located on the second floor and students were seen moving between classes, using lockers as needed. There was a lot of hustle and bustle with chatter and conversation between students. The third floor housed the fourth- and fifth-grade classes in addition to a smaller room for the special education resource room. Students in this program had mild to moderate needs and were included in the general education classroom for content area subjects such as social studies and science.

*Process of SWPBS with active student involvement*

During the tour, the researcher was introduced to some of the teachers. At that time, the research initiative of SWPBS with student involvement was briefly mentioned. The following figure depicts the process that was used with the infusion of student involvement in the SWPBS initiative. Each step of the process is further described.
Figure 2: Process of SWPBS with student involvement.
Commitment obtained. Initially, commitment and support needed to be gained from the superintendent. Therefore, in early December, a short meeting with the superintendent and principal was set to explain the proposed research and evidence of IRB approval. The superintendent approved the study, and since the principal had prior experience with SWPBS, her support and commitment was readily obtained. An email was sent to the teachers and staff that consisted of an introduction of the researcher and a detailed explanation of the study. The principal followed-up with an email welcoming the researcher and asking for teachers to consider serving on the SWPBS team, as well as sending her recommendations for students that would be good candidates to serve as student participants. Prior to the first SWPBS team meeting, the principal determined which teachers, faculty, and/or staff were interested in serving on the SWPBS team, including the principal, secretary, lead teacher, union representative, and school counselor. As the research progressed, the principal appointed members of the faculty to serve on the team, consisting mostly of the teaching staff.

Student selection. Soon after these emails, teachers sent the principal recommendations for students to invite as team participants. Parents were mailed consent forms explaining the research and giving permission for their child to participate in study. Having teacher recommendations, parent consent, and student assent led to the beginning of the SWPBS meeting process. All recommended students had a choice to decline participation at any point in time without repercussions, even after student assent was secured. Participating students were representative of each grade level, fourth through eighth, totaling 15 in all. Gender was equally represented as well as those students who
were at-risk behaviorally and/or academically. Some students demonstrated developing leadership skills as they were able to have their voices and concerns heard.

**SWPBS team activities.** The first SWPBS team meeting, which took place during mid-March, was scheduled after school. The school day ended at 2:00 PM and an after-school-activities bus was available at 4:00 PM to transport students home. Unfortunately, the principal and secretary were the only adults in attendance at the first meeting. The principal found that even with her personal recommendations for certain staff and faculty to serve on the SWPBS team, participation was lacking. The principal understood the staff and faculty to be very overwhelmed with current responsibilities and duties. Had more time been allocated to obtain commitment, more participation may have occurred. The initial activity included a team-building exercise allowing all participants to appreciate their differences and commonalities. From the information gathered in this activity, a team name was selected. Next, after looking at examples of mission statements specific to student involvement, a mission statement was written and is included in the next chapter.

To determine area of improvement, VIP signatures and accountability book referrals were examined. In an effort to examine school rules, a summary of the responses from the SET interviews regarding school rules were shared. The rules that were most commonly cited by students included: keep hands, feet, and belongings to self; no bullying/verbal harassment; and treat others the way you want to be treated. Next, the group discussed the most problematic behaviors. Using graphs depicting the available data from the first semester and general discussion among students and adults,
problematic behaviors were listed and prioritized. From this discussion, bullying (defined as harassment/teasing/taunting) was determined to be the top priority, school-wide behavior problem, therefore identified as the dependent measure. Furthermore, the dependent measure of bullying was measured using the indirect measure of ODR, as this behavior was operationalized on referral forms and in the reporting system of FileMaker.

Elinoff, Chafouleas and Sassu (2004) operationalize bullying to be behavior that is hostile and proactive in the sense that the bully intentionally targets another person without having been provoked or reacting in response to the action of others. In addition to provocation, Lee (2006) lists common themes that seem to describe bullying behaviors to involve intent, hurt, and duration. Bullying behaviors tend to last over a duration of time (Elinoff, et al 2004), and there is an imbalance of power, as the bully targets individuals or groups of individuals who seem to be weaker. A temporal element of time exists as bullying can occur over a period or duration of time (Lee, 2006; Elinoff et al. 2004). Hazler (2001) mentions primary characteristics of bullying to involve harm being repeatedly done to another person, and an unfair match among participants.

In early April, and in response to the interest of students and faculty to focus on anti-bullying as the dependent measure in the SWPBS improvement initiative, the second team meeting was scheduled. Due to time constraints and after school commitments, an early morning meeting was scheduled with the teachers to share results and discussions from the first meeting. It was during this time that teachers seemed quite preoccupied and overwhelmed, as it was rumored that the school might close down before the next school year. During this meeting, the information discussed and gathered in the first meeting
(i.e., the school vision statement), was shared with the teachers. Teachers were commended for their hard work, as it was explained they should be proud of the students on the team who worked so hard during the last meeting. Teachers were invited to make any recommendations to the plans discussed, including the choice of bullying as the priority school-wide behavior to be addressed. During this meeting teachers were found to be in full support of the anti-bullying initiative, as preliminary work had already been addressed district-wide and at the intervention school. Some of these preliminary activities involved the use of the Olweus (1997) program in which a survey had been conducted to obtain feedback regarding the status of bullying in the school. Additionally, a school organization, entitled Girl Power, that has a large focus on empowering girls, found interest in this problem and had spent time conducting activities in support of improving the school climate, such as promoting displays of bulletin boards with anti-bullying rhetoric. The school newspaper recently ran an article, written by one of the members of this group expressing the concerns that many students had about bullying.

**SWPBS planned interventions.** In preparation for the team-selected anti-bullying SWPBS initiative, the researcher determined that the content from Davis and Davis (1997), *Empowering Bystanders*, was appropriate to use with the limited time available. The Davis and Davis program, largely based upon research and practices of Olweus (1993, 2001) outlines what bystanders can do to help someone being bullied. It also helped tailor the intervention that was planned by the students to deter bullying in the school. For example, the authors explain several things bystanders can do, including helping the target get away, telling the bully to stop, befriending later by telling the target
they do not deserve that, sitting with the person at lunch (an indirect intervention), and assisting the person while they are being bullied by setting up a distraction (a direct intervention). The program, *Empowering Bystanders* (Davis & Davis, 1997), in conjunction with the Olweus Program, both emulate and uphold those best practices recognized and supported by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). Specifically, CEC’s policy on safe and positive school environments further support the legal mandates that require schools to use evidence-based practices that promote the academic and social-emotional needs of school-aged children (http://www.cec.sped.org/Content/NavigationMenu/NewsIssues/TeachingLearningCenter/ProfessionalPracticeTopicsInfo/BehaviorManagement/Bullying/CEC_positive_school_climate.pdf). Furthermore, the crucial elements of these programs are mirrored in best-practice recommended by the CEC. Recommendations include teaching students what bullying is, developing the understanding that bystanders, including teachers and students, are obligated to act when they witness bullying, and to practice solutions or strategies to use in response to bullying by using teachable moments or more purposeful activities such as role-playing. CEC also recommends that an anti-bullying team be developed that includes, students, teachers, administrators, and parents to develop programs in support of those students who are bullied and those who are engaging in bullying behavior (http://www.cec.sped.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Search&template=/CM/HTMLDisplay.cfm&ContentID=10842).
Davis and Davis (1997) recommended the following be in place to protect those who report bullying: make it safe to tell, have positive outcomes available for telling, and encourage and appreciate telling. In addition to the Davis and Davis (1997) *Empowering Bystanders* program, the researcher referred the Olweus Program to staff and faculty which is a more in-depth anti-bullying program. Such a program would need an entire school year devoted to its use. Prior to this study, the intervention school used the Olweus (1996) anti-bullying survey. Therefore, results of the Olweus survey were briefly shared later during classroom visits.

Later that day, the researcher met with the students and planned specifically what would be shared with the entire school body. The following agenda was planned for the team meeting:

1. Introduction and purpose of the visit
2. Share Olweus bullying survey comments made by students
3. Students were invited to share experiences where they witnessed bullying
4. Conducted self-esteem activity that was relative to the effects of bullying
5. Reviewed school rules
6. Directions were given as to how to report bullying (see bullying report form in Appendix C)
7. Reports of bullying would result in person’s name being added to VIP book
8. Ideas of incentives to add to the office treasure box were generated from classes.

After plans were made for class visits, the team worked on a bullying scenario role-play applying the skills and strategies discussed. Roles of active bullies, passive
bullies (those that stand back and do nothing, yet are OK with the bullying), active bystanders (those who help the target), and passive bystanders (those who don’t agree with the bullying, but stand back and do nothing) were assigned (Davis & Davis, 2007).

Since student-centered videos were recommended by Davis and Davis (2007), students decided to have the scene take place on the playground. After several practices, a videotape of the role play was made and watched by the students. Unfortunately, this and one other video-taped role play were not shared with the remaining student-body due to time constraints; however copies were given to the principal for future use.

*Implementation of SWPBS Anti-Bullying Interventions – Classroom Visits.* A couple weeks into April, the principal, researcher, and student representatives from the SWPBS team assembled in the library to prepare for classroom visits. Based upon the Empowering Bystanders in Bullying Prevention (Davis & Davis, 2007) program, the researcher-created cue cards were distributed and students volunteered for an assigned dialogue or job (See Appendix B). Based upon student choices as to which classes they would visit, classroom assignments were made. In each classroom, the researcher shared a summary of the Olweus survey findings, the principal led the self-esteem activity, and the students began the introduction of the project, shared the rules, and discussed the use of the VIP book with incentives.

Students responded well to the points made during the activity. When the discussion of how reporting bullying would be recognized, the fourth and fifth grade students were more receptive and suggested incentives that could be purchased for the office treasure box. Suggested items included Slinky’s, yo-yo’s, and stickers.
Interestingly, the seventh-grade students brought up a concern about adults also being held responsible for following these rules or expectations.

Overall, the responses indicated students were quite receptive. Teachers welcomed the visiting students, and the principal set up a schedule to follow. It was agreed that each classroom visit would take no more than 25 minutes, which was readily adhered to. Teacher participation varied from class to class with some teachers sitting quietly at their desks and using the time to get needed work completed, while other teachers joining in the activity.

Also recommended by Davis and Davis (2007) was to conduct peace day assemblies which involve students and adults celebrating successes. During mid-April, and less than two weeks after the classroom visits were conducted, the researcher planned a final meeting that involved celebrating successes and served as an additional session for students and teachers to find continued support in this initiative. Those in attendance consisted of the 4th and 5th grade teachers, one of the 6th - 8th grade teachers, the principal, the secretary, and the school counselor. Since adults were in attendance with the students in this final meeting, the researcher planned to again conduct the team-building activity that was done at the first meeting. The purpose of this activity was again for all to see that even between students and adults there are similarities that exist and differences to appreciate. To close the activity, each group shared their differences and similarities and celebrated the accomplishments of the SWPBS team’s anti-bullying initiative and the overall successes of the school year.
The researcher explained that the teachers have put in years of dedication and hard work that should also be celebrated. The meeting concluded with pizza, cake, and ice cream for all. Even with the news confirming the school would be closing, all present smiled, laughed, and enjoyed the time together.

Data Collection Methods

*Quantitative Data*

To guide the direction and focus of the research, plans to obtain SET scores to determine the comparability between the intervention and control school were made. Interviews took place for the SET assessment at the intervention school with plans to obtain SET scores from the control school. On the scheduled day, in mid February, the principal at the intervention school escorted three students at a time from each grade level into the office. Each of the students had been recommended by teachers and had completed the required consent form. The principal introduced the researcher and explained the purpose of the interviews. Students grinned from ear to ear when they were told their teachers had recommended them. After assent was acquired, each student was asked two questions: (a) What are the school rules? (b) How many times had they been asked to sign the VIP book?

Following the student focus group meetings, teachers were interviewed and asked similar questions. Scores from the SET assessment were calculated for the intervention school. Unfortunately, SET scores were not made available from the control school despite repeated requests. Therefore, the using of SET scores for comparison was not possible. Even though SET scores from the control school were unobtainable, results
from the intervention school will be discussed in the following chapter. Although it was not possible to determine comparability using SET scores, the time spent gathering SET assessment data from the intervention school was of great value, as it allowed the researcher to meet students, staff, and faculty, and obtain preliminary information. This data, in addition to the archival data including referral data, VIP book entries, accountability, and lunch/recess detention reports were used in the first SWPBS meeting. Specifically, graphs of the archival data were used to determine the current conditions of school-wide behavior patterns.

Pre-intervention baseline quantitative data were obtained from the selected schools practicing SWPBS without any direct, active student involvement. Specifically, the indirect measure of ODR targeting bullying was compared for the last two nine-week periods of the school year for the intervention and control schools. The aggregation and analysis of the ODR data was accessed through a database system similar to the School-Wide Information System (SWIS) developed by the University of Oregon. This is a web-based system that stores electronic accounts of ODR entered by school personnel and provides summarized rates of referrals for individual students, specific settings, classrooms, and school-wide (Irvin et al., 2006). The participating schools in this study utilized a system called FileMaker to easily access ODR information (http://www.filemaker.com/products/fmp/index.html). FileMaker is used to organize and analyze a variety of data sets. It can be customized to follow the same procedures for entering ODR and is equipped for creating spreadsheets of data that can be transformed into graphs depicting behavioral patterns.
Qualitative Data

Student focus groups. To complement the quantitative data, qualitative data collection procedures included semi-structured interviews and participant observations. One focus group interview with a group of eight students lasted approximately 30 to 40 minutes and was scheduled after students had about three months to participate as full members of the SWPBS team. Patton (2002) advises that when using group interviewing there may be a variation in data since different views are being communicated. Therefore, he advises that questions be semi-structured with questions carefully worded. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) recommend group interviews instead of individual interviews for gathering adolescent’s perspectives on certain issues. The social interaction among peers tends to foster more conversation and expansion of answers. However, this can also lead to some student dominating the interview. Based upon Creswell’s (1998) advice, individuals were encouraged to take turns talking and shyer students were given more time to respond. The situation of certain individuals dominating the conversation was also avoided by adhering to the pre-planned topic and questions (Creswell, 1998).

Patton (2002) advised that plans be made to keep note-taking to a minimum, since writing may make interviewees feel uncomfortable or distracted. Specific to student interviews, notes included those types of observations that were of interest, such as students who seemed to take the lead, facial expressions shown, or different tones of voice used. Identification numbers were assigned to students in the field notes to further provide a level of confidentiality (Creswell, 1998) since the students were interviewed in groups.
It was essential that the researcher engaged in self-reflection after the interview and wrote down any thoughts that came to mind. Transcriptions of the recorded interviews occurred by a hired and experienced transcriber. After the transcription was available, time was allocated to listen to the tape again and check for accuracy. Special attention was paid to “linguistic complexities” that Kvale (1996) describes as pauses, where sentences end, or how long a pause may last. Paying attention to accurate translation and linguistic complexities allowed for reliable data, that increasing the trustworthiness of the transcripts, which improved the thoroughness of the research.

Since this inquiry involved student interviews, three essential issues were also be considered as outlined by Patton (2002). First, it was essential to have a level of trust established so that students perceived the researcher as a “quasi-friend” rather than an authority figure. Second, the interview questions were clearly communicated in a what or how format rather than “why” since children can take questions literally. Third, focus groups were established to encourage more conversation, as students were motivated to talk more generally with others of the same age and peer group (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

An important issue to consider, in addition to building trust, is to establish rapport with the students. One way to do this was to meet in a comfortable, familiar place. In the case of this study, the students and researcher met around a table in the school library. Following the advice of Kvale (1996), the researcher made sure the setting was one that provided a sense of safety so students felt safe enough to talk about their experiences. Therefore, meeting in the library and providing bottled water seemed to help. Since the interviews were audio taped, the participants were assured that everything would be kept
confidential so they felt a level of trust in the interaction, and freedom from deception (Creswell, 1998). Students were reminded to refrain from mentioning anyone’s name: teacher or student. After recordings were obtained, they were kept in a secure, locked area and destroyed after the analysis was complete.

Another important issue was to obtain informed consent from interview participants. Kvale explains that with school-aged children, a researcher would need to determine who would be in the position of giving consent. For the school-aged students, per the federal law and the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the researcher obtained permission for student involvement from parents or guardians. The principal assisted in the distribution and collection of the consent forms. It was also IRB procedure for the researcher to gain assent from student participants. Therefore, assent forms were collected before student participation began.

To address the use of interviewing, it was important to determine appropriate and fitting questions for the interview process that supported the theoretical underpinnings of the phenomenological inquiry. As recommended by Patton (2002), this type of inquiry had two implications, first being cognizant of what people experience and how they interpret those experiences, and second, for the researcher to sufficiently know what a person experiences the researcher must be directly involved as much as possible.

Using a semi-structured interview format, the researcher was open to change in the sequence and form of questions, yet a predetermined set of questions was written, mindful of the themes to be covered (Kvale, 1996). Kvale recommends that the
researcher connect research questions to the interviews, keep the conversation reciprocal, and use types of questions that include introduction, follow-up; and probing questions.

In early June and at the close of the school year, the researcher greeted the students and explained the purpose of the focus group. Initially, informal questions were asked such as: students’ ages, grade level, what hobbies they had, and what they liked about their school and why. Additional probing questions included the following:

1. What type of changes would you like to see happen in your school?
2. Describe any recent changes that have occurred.
3. What are your thoughts about these changes?
4. Describe your involvement in these changes.
5. How do you think your involvement and input was valued by your teachers? By your principal?
6. What recommendations would you have for future students who want to be involved in school change?

**Adult interviews.** In addition to conducting focus groups with students actively involved in SWPBS, the researcher interviews teachers and the administrative staff. These interviews took place on an individual basis, and a semi-structured format was utilized. Interviews were scheduled at various times during the day. Some educators indicated specific locations that would be best for their interviews. With this in mind, the researcher interviewed educators in various places including: classrooms, the teacher’s lounge, and the principal’s office. Interviews lasted from 10 – 30 minutes. The researcher asked specific questions, but conversation was generally open and informal.
Interviews with the adults involved in the process expanded the perception of how effective and beneficial student involvement was in SWPBS. Relative to the active involvement of students in SWPBS, adults were asked a short series of questions. Questions posed to school personnel included:

1. What type of changes would you like to see happen in your school?
2. Describe any recent changes that have occurred.
3. What are your thoughts about these changes?
4. Describe student involvement in these changes.
5. How do you think student involvement or input was valued by adults in the school?
6. What recommendations would you have for future students who want to be involved in school change?

This series of questions was changed, modified, or additional questions were incorporated as necessary.

*Observations.* Additionally, observations were conducted to provide triangulation for the data available from the study participants and quantitative data. Observations included meetings that took place with staff and students or intervention activities in which the phenomenon of student participation was observable. For example, initial meetings involved adults, children and the researcher examining ODR, accountability, VIP book data, and lunch/detention assignments.

Other opportunities for observations included the classroom training that was planned, practiced, and conducted by the team at each grade level. The researcher,
students, and other adults were assigned jobs and followed step-by-step lessons to share problematic school-wide behaviors that included bullying, review of school rules, the use of bullying-reporting procedures, the continued use of accountability and the VIP book. Field notes were written, anecdotally accounting for the interactions and experiences that unfolded as SWPBS activities were implemented. This was done following observations and the researcher used a laptop to record comprehensive, thorough notes.

**Role of the researcher.** Prior to the observation process, it was necessary to determine what role the researcher would take. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) suggest that phenomenology begins with a level of silence and thoughtfulness to understand how and what meaning is being constructed around events in the participants’ lives. This may initially involve the researcher taking the position as an outsider and then assuming more of an insider role as time is spent with participants in the research site. An effective strategy to becoming a participant observer was to take into consideration what Patton (2002) recommends as two implications for researchers choosing to use phenomenological inquiry: First, Patton (2002) explains that the researcher needs to have a good understanding of the subject matter or the issues relative to the experiences of those involved. In this case, the researcher had prior experience in a pilot study (reported in a separate section) and spent time with the principal prior to meeting with staff and students. Second, Patton describes an essential component of phenomenology that requires the researcher to gain a thorough understanding of what individuals are experiencing by being involved in the experience themselves. This was done by the researcher, again spending time with the principal and later with the team to listen to
concerns and provide the opportunity to problem-solve by identifying problematic behaviors, select interventions, and to teach expected behaviors.

Pilot Study

Based upon a pilot study (Oswald, Safran & Johanson, 2005) designed to establish SWPBS supports in a rural middle school in southeastern Ohio, some procedures and processes were replicated in this study. For a complete description of the pilot study and results, see Appendix A. In the pilot study, it was initially determined through the use of the Effective Behavior Supports Survey and further discussion between teachers and administrative faculty that the school would focus its efforts on specific settings that were in need of improvement. After reviewing examples from the University of Oregon’s Project PREPARE (see Colvin, Kameenui, & Sugai, 1994), a set of rules and behavioral expectations specific to settings of the school were developed. Upon the formation of a PBS team, administrators and teachers determined that the setting in most need of improvement was the hallway. This included the transition for all three-grade levels to lunch after dismissal from classes. Aside from changing physical characteristics, including changing the flow of traffic and movement of students, and staggering times of dismissals to lunch as recommended by Lewis and Garrison–Harrell (1999), the team also targeted specific behaviors, such as jumping, kicking, or pushing. Independent variables selected were active supervision (Colvin et al., 1997; Kartub et al., 2000; Lewis & Garrison-Harrell, 1999; Lewis et al., 2000) and using pre-corrections, which are defined as verbal or non-verbal prompts or reminders given to students before they enter into a specific setting or previous to a transition (Colvin et al., 1997; Lewis &
Garrison-Harrell, 1999; Lewis et al., 1998, 2000). In addition to these interventions, the staff was trained to use incentive techniques such as verbal and non-praise and awarding good behavior tickets. The 5-week intervention phase resulted in a 42.36% reduction in targeted behaviors between baseline and treatment phases.

One thing learned from the pilot study that impacted the current study involved spending less time on the use of a needs assessment to help determine a system in most need of development or change. The needs assessment fostered communication among staff, but it took valuable time to aggregate, analyze, and communicate the results to the staff. This time may have been better spent discussing and prioritizing areas of development through staff dialogue and consensus. Therefore, it was determined that a formal needs assessment would not be utilized in the current study.

Second, targeted behaviors needed to be more accurately and precisely defined so consistent data could be obtained. In the case of the pilot study, university students were available to collect data. In the current study, staff were encouraged to evaluate ways in which they could use their own resources or school personnel to collect data.

Third, the time between the baseline and intervention phases was five weeks. This was likely not enough time for students to make behavioral expectations routine. It would have been beneficial to staff and students to have a longer practice time before post-intervention data was collected.

Fourth, a generalization or follow-up phase was not conducted since the plan for teaching expected behaviors in the hallway was initiated at the end of the school year and time was limited. It did not allow for a follow-up phase to determine maintenance of
behaviors, particularly into the next school year. Based upon the procedures used in the pilot study, the current study included the use of mixed-methods. However, rather than using direct observation of specific targeted behaviors; Office Discipline Referrals (ODR) were analyzed for specific trends in pre-and post-treatment assessments. ODR can be used in making data-based decisions in a time-efficient manner rather than direct observation data. In addition to ODR, interviews and observations took place to better appreciate the experiences of those involved.

Unlike the pilot study that focused on decreasing problematic behaviors in a specific setting, this study focused on the active and direct involvement of students in the planning, implementation, and effectiveness of SWPBS.

Reliability

Concerns may be raised suggesting the involvement of the researcher might compromise objectivity. In order to address this concern, and following the advice of Patton (2002), the researcher established a level of “empathic neutrality” (p. 50) that identifies a position between a researcher being too involved in the phenomenon under study, compromising one’s judgment, or remaining too detached and aloof, which can lead to a lack of understanding. In this study, the researcher addressed empathic neutrality by journaling observations and general experiences soon after each visit. Journaling allowed the researcher to review observations and reflect with a necessary level of objectivity since some events and observations included the participation of the researcher. Little time elapsed between observations and journaling so memory of events
would be fresh. After journaling, the researcher read through the written accounts for accuracy.

Creswell (1998) also recommends researchers conduct member checks that involve soliciting participants’ views to see if accounts are accurate and credible. In this study, the researcher deferred to the principal and clarified any accounts that were unclear or questions to ensure accuracy of the researcher’s interpretations of events. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) reiterate this view by explaining that the inductive process does not involve the researcher attempting to prove or disprove a theory. Rather, it is an attempt to develop a theory or understanding as the researcher moves through the investigation. Patton says, “The neutral investigator enters into the research with no axe to grind, no theory to prove, and no predetermined judgments” (p. 51).

Following the advice of Bogdan and Biklen (1998) the issue of reliability can be further addressed by spending ample time in the research setting, consistently contending with beliefs and attitudes by remembering the ultimate goal is to obtain knowledge, and to record very detailed field notes. Therefore, field notes and interview transcripts collected in this study captured a vivid description of events, objects, experiences, and conversations. To further address reliability, Creswell (1998) recommends that when interviewing, judgments should be suspended and examined at a later time to see if the information is reliable and accurately reflects what was experienced by participants. Creswell (1998) explains that a researcher should clarify his or her own bias at the onset of the study. This involves the researcher commenting on past experiences, prejudices or attitudes that may affect the outlook and analysis of the study. In this study, since the
technique of bracketing was used, the researcher wrote these thoughts or opinions in the margins of observation notes.

Validity

Another typical concern with phenomenology and other types of qualitative research is addressing the validity of the results. As Bogdan and Biklen (1998) recommend that a qualitative researcher should not imply that a particular sample is generalizable to other samples. Rather, they encourage the researcher to see there are similarities between analogous settings and subjects. This is based upon the notion that human behavior is commonly not indiscriminate or unplanned. Therefore, in this study, the researcher looked for links and commonalities between the experiences of active student involvement in SWPBS, interview transcripts, and pre- and post-Office Discipline Referrals (ODR) in constant comparison with what the literature reports about student involvement in school reform initiatives. It was necessary to remember that this comparison involved looking generally at school reform and student involvement since there is no evidence of direct active student involvement in SWPBS in the literature.

Interestingly, Bogdan and Lutfiyya (1992) view the concept of validity as less of a problem in qualitative research because the inquiry is inductive rather than deductive. The inductive process of qualitative inquiry automatically addresses validity since, “questions, findings, themes, and concepts are developed in the process of collecting data” (p. 247). Kvale (1996) proposes that phenomenological inquiry involves elucidating what appears and how it appears that should be described in detail relative to the substance and make-up of the person’s consciousness. Therefore, as recommended
by Kvale, an “investigation of essence” was used to not look at the phenomena as a separate component, but to search for the common meaning these experiences brought and are applicable to the population of students active in school reform as a whole. This was done by determining common themes among the data collected through mixed-methods in this inquiry.

Reliability and validity both have specific relevance to the quantitative methods used in this study. In this case, standardization of data entry and reporting procedures were planned. This included filling in fields (i.e., student, date, reason for referral) on referral forms consistently as well as accurately entering this information into the data system. Based upon the research practices of Taylor-Greene et al. (1997) the reliability of ODR was checked through randomly selecting five percent of all referrals for two consecutive school years. From this selection, comparison of completed fields were determined. The benefit to using this type of inquiry is that the collection of the data can be done in a timely manner.

In addition to common themes and concepts found in the qualitative research, the quantitative data provided by ODR aid in making timely decisions with additional credibility given to a cause and effect relationship (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Since validity rests in terms of inferences made during the outcome of data analysis for quantitative research, the ODR in this study was examined after aggregation of data. Viewing results allowed the researcher and the SWPBS team to interpret the results of ODR, therefore making data-based decisions.
Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) outline several strengths as well as weaknesses when using mixed-methods research, yet the positives outweigh the negatives. Some suggested strengths include the fact that words, visual depictions, and narratives add meaning to numbers while the numbers add accuracy. Not being confined to one research approach allows for an expanded range of questions to be answered, weaknesses of one approach can be compensated for strengths of the other approach, and stronger evidence in the conclusions can be found.

Weaknesses in using a mixed-methods approach include that it can be time consuming and difficult for one researcher to do, as well as more expensive. To face these weaknesses, this study recruited a school that has a computerized system for entry, compilation, and reporting of ODR as it is very efficient and useful when making decisions relative to SWPBS in a timely manner. When using systems such as the School-Wide Information System (SWIS) Irvin et al. (2006) found respondents responsible for data entry and reporting generally rated the use of this system as requiring “much less effort” (p. 18) than manually recording ODR data.

The use of mixed-methods including semi-structure interviews, observation, and the collection of ODR, further allowed for the triangulation of data. Patton (2002) outlines four types of triangulation, two of which were applicable in this study. First, data triangulation involves using a variety of data sources that can assist a researcher in obtaining more valid results. Rather than being limited to one method that can be vulnerable to errors, using multiple methods allows “cross-data validity checks” (p. 248). Second, methodological triangulation uses multiple methods to study a single phenomena
or problem. In this case, the quantitative and qualitative methods in this study sought to answer the *what* and *how* students perceive and experience their involvement in SWPBS.

Data Analysis

*Qualitative data.* In an effort to understand the varying factors or aspects that contribute to the involvement or lack of involvement of students at a middle school level active in school reform, a phenomenological approach was utilized. This approach allowed the researcher to focus on the central issue of student involvement and to determine students’ perceptions of involvement and how they experience, live, and personify the phenomena. This allowed the researcher to better understand the complex factors that exist socially, culturally, and linguistically. It was through the interpretation of the phenomena that meaning could be established since, according to Bogdan and Bilken (1998), reality is socially constructed. Detailed notes and records provided an interpretation of reality and elucidated and informed stakeholders of the current status of student involvement in school reform.

When translating interviews, a qualitative researcher also considers language semantics and syntax (Kvale, 1996). Transcribing interviews involved the researcher being mindful of different dialects and idioms present in the language spoken. In the interest of a phenomenological inquiry, the researcher followed the recommendations of Kvale (1996) who advises a researcher to begin the analysis of the data by writing a detailed narrative of his or her own experience of the phenomena. This was done by examining “bracketed” notes in the margin referring to my own thoughts about the students’ experiences. Furthermore, using the technique of hortizontalization, the
researcher read through the students’ statements looking for statements of meaning within the text. Per Bogdan and Biklen’s (1998) suggestion, varying themes emerged, as the researcher “play[ed] with metaphors, analogies, and concepts” (p. 189). At this point a diagram or table was developed to represent this information visually since it represented the varying themes.

Creswell (1998) suggests working at reducing information by starting with no more than 25 to 30 categories and reducing them to 5 or 6. A textual description of what happened and a structural description of how the students experienced the phenomena was then developed. This assisted in writing summaries and outcomes of the overall description and meaning of the experience in a narrative report.

When analyzing observation notes, a similar process of analysis proposed by Creswell (1998) was used as the researcher read through the reflective statements and evaluated thoughts, adding applicable thoughts and interpretations as appropriate. This “read-through” allowed the researcher to develop varying themes found in the thick description of the text. Devising a table or graph, the researcher coded these themes and sorted and organized them. A textual description of what happened and a structural description of how the students experienced the phenomena emerged.

An important note of consideration is that observations were conducted first so there was ample opportunity to see the phenomena of student involvement before the students described their perspectives during the interviews. When students described their interactions and perspectives the researcher was able to develop a deeper and more empathic understanding of active student involvement in SWPBS. Observation data was
directly supported by interview data as students and staff reported a decrease in the number of problematic problems. See results chapter for details.

**Quantitative data.** Preliminary Office Discipline Referrals (ODR) data were reported for the third nine-week period of the school year, followed by a post-treatment analysis of ODR during the last nine-week period. ODR data included reports of the average number of referrals per bullying (harassment/teasing/taunting) incidents. Information was readily available through a web-based data system, FileMaker, to enable the team to determine the effectiveness of the interventions. Comparisons were made between the control and intervention schools on reported bullying incidents during the intervention period.

In addition to a possible decrease in bullying incidents, this study used the triangulation of a variety sources to answer the questions regarding what and how students experience active involvement in SWPBS. The information gleaned during this study was triangulated or funneled in a collective manner to further illuminate or understand the phenomenon being studied. The understanding of experiences and perceptions were evolving and on-going.

**Conclusion**

A mixed-method inquiry is fitting for investigating active and direct student involvement in SWPBS. Commonly used measures in SWPBS include the examination of archival data, such as Office Discipline Referrals. To further complement this type of inquiry, interviews and participant observations were used. Such additional measures have been found useful in studying the effectiveness of educational programming
(McPhail, 1995) as individuals “make meaning of consciousness while engaging in activities” (p. 7). This chapter: (a) outlined the development of the conceptual context, central research question, and the interview questions, (b) presented the findings of a pilot study since mixed-methods have not generally been used in SWPBS, (c) discussed issues of reliability and validity, (d) defined the role of the researcher, (e) described data collection procedures that included semi-structured interviews, observations, and review of ODR with the use of FileMaker, and (f) described the data analysis procedures utilized.
CHAPTER FOUR

Results

This case study used mixed-methods to better understand the interpretations and perceptions of teachers and students regarding active student involvement in School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports (SWPBS). Using representative sampling, teachers recommended three students from each grade level to actively participate in SWPBS. An intervention school was used and one other neighboring school in the district served as the control site. In this chapter, qualitative data presented include the researcher’s observations, student focus group outcomes, and interviews with adult participants. The educators’ quotes are indicated by their job titles. Students’ responses are grouped according to questions asked, since the students were interviewed using a focus group format, making it impossible to identify individual student responses. Quantitative results were collected from the use of the School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET), and archival data obtained from the intervention and control schools.

In the initial stage of the study, the study proposed to use a quantitative measure to assess the overall status of SWPBS in both the intervention and control schools. The researcher used the School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET) to analyze seven specific school features including: expectations defined, behavioral expectations taught, on-going system of reward for behavioral expectations, school-wide system for responding to behavioral violations, monitoring and decision-making, management, and district-level support (Sugai, Lewis-Palmer, Todd, & Todd, 2001). Some features required the collection of permanent products, such as the discipline handbook and the referral forms.
Quantitative Results

Data were collected through scripted interviews, part of the SET analysis, consisting of questions for students and teachers. Teachers’ questions included: What are the school rules? Have you taught behavioral expectations this year? In addition, students were asked the number of times they were recognized for good behavior and to orally list the school rules. The principal was also interviewed and provided responses to specific questions that included: What system do you use to collect office discipline referrals? Do you have a team that addresses school-wide discipline? Do you have an out-of-school liaison to assist your school in SWPBS? The researchers’ observations specific to SET requirements included to look for visible signs of SWPBS such as school-wide rules posted throughout the building and to determine if a documented plan existed for crisis situations.

Results of the SET Assessment

An overall, very low SET score of 67% was calculated for the intervention school. Of the seven features assessed, the category of expectations defined scored the lowest (25%) as no rules were visibly posted school-wide. Subsequently, monitoring and decision-making scored a moderate 50%, as there was no team use of data to make decisions regarding behavioral infractions; however there was a system in place to monitor office discipline referrals (ODR). The two features that scored above 80% included, behavioral expectations taught (80%), and a system for responding to behavioral violations (100%).
Through SET teacher and student interviews it was determined that behavioral expectations were readily taught. For example, 51% of the 15 students interviewed were able to orally state 69% of the school-wide rules. This category was also supported by the administration and the district-wide Comprehensive Continuous Improvement Plan (CCIP) that was used to increase overall academic achievement and improve school climate.

The category responding to behavioral violations was supported by evidence as a documented system was in place to handle behavioral infractions, with 90% of the teachers responding that they agree with how the administration handles and supports incidents of school behavior.

While conducting the SET analysis, the researcher was informed that the school selected to serve as the control school for this study had undergone a full Ohio Integrated Systems Model (OISM) assessment. After numerous emails and correspondences with the principal and others involved in the OISM assessment, the documentation obtained was an overall report of the OISM implementation review results. In the review, several sub-components of the OISM assessment included the collection of evidence of student performance in literacy and behavior that involved the use of the SET, among other assessments such as the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy Skills (DIBELS), discipline reports generated through the use of School-Wide Information System (SWIS), and the completion of the CulturallyResponsive Practices survey. Unfortunately, the OISM review summary report did not include specific scores related to the areas covered.
by the SET. Therefore, predetermining the exact status of SWPBS using SET scores for comparison purposes between schools was not possible.

**ODR Archival Data**

In this study archival data were collected. Those data consisted of Office Discipline Referrals (ODR) tracked through the use of an electronic web-based FileMaker system. Office discipline referrals were compared for both schools, using consecutive third and fourth nine-week periods of the school year. This served as an initial comparison between the two schools, as they followed the same procedures with monitoring and reporting ODR. A comparison between control and intervention schools was made by examining the overall number of ODR by frequency per the number of students. Table 1 below shows the referrals for the intervention school as n = 1.1 pre and n = .9 post and .3 and .3 for the control school. The results of an unpaired t-test at a significance level of p < 0.05 indicate that the difference is found to be statistically significant because there was a slight decrease in referrals at the intervention school and no change in numbers of referrals at the control school.
Percentages of ODR decreased from the third to fourth-nine week periods for both schools, with a decrease of 6% for the intervention school and 60% for the control school. An examination of individual student ODR reports from the intervention school revealed that one student during the last nine-week period had earned 50% of the overall school referrals. During this period, a slight increase in behaviors such as harassment and insubordination occurred, consistent with this student’s individual discipline records.

As a way to verify the data collected through ODR reports, the researcher consulted with the Ohio Department of Education’s (ODE) website that requires schools to report incidences of disciplinary actions. According to initial findings from the ODE’s discipline occurrence reports, the intervention school reported 19 incidents of harassment and intimidation that required suspension of some sort, whereas the control school had no reports of harassment and intimidation. Upon a follow-up visit to the ODE website, the
number of 19 behavioral incidences reported from the intervention school was no longer available, however the district as a whole reported a total of 32 incidences of harassment and intimation. With the incidences previously reported earlier specifically from the intervention school, data regarding bullying behaviors could be triangulated. Unfortunately, that was not possible after a follow-up check of the website, since individual schools in the district did not report specific discipline occurrences.

**ODR data by behavior.** Reports of referrals by type of behavioral infraction were provided by the intervention and control school for bullying, defined as harassment/teasing/taunting. Including the outlier who was responsible for 50% of referrals during the fourth nine-week period specific to bullying, the intervention school showed a 25% increase in referrals, specific to the targeted behavior. In contrast, the control school had a 50% increase in referrals for bullying. Table 2 below illustrates referral rates for the intervention school as n = 8 pre-intervention and n = 10 post-intervention, and n = 4 and n = 6 respectively for the control school. The results of an unpaired t-test at a significance level of \( p < 0.05 \) indicate that for the intervention and control schools the increase was not statistically significant.
**Qualitative Results**

The last few visits to the intervention school were spent conducting interviews. Therefore, in addition to results from archival data and the SET assessment, eight adults were individually interviewed, including each grade level teacher, the principal, school counselor, special educator, and the Title One instructor. On average, the interviews lasted approximately 20 minutes. All interviews were scheduled in advance and teachers chose meeting times and places. Additionally, one focus group interview was conducted with participating students. At the outset, students who participated in SWPBS were interviewed using a focus group format. This consisted of 15 students from grades four through eight. The focus group meeting took place in the library and lasted approximately 20 minutes. Students huddled around a table while some of the eighth grader students choose to stand as they seemed full of energy and excitement. No other
individuals, except for the secretary and principal were present, and they sat off to the side of the room talking quietly. Students were reminded to take turns talking and to talk clear enough so the light flashed on the recorder to ensure their comments were recorded accurately. Teachers were individually interviewed and asked similar questions.

Using open-coding, data derived from the interviews were analyzed. Following Creswell’s (1998) recommendations, the researcher formed categories and subsequently studied each category to look for properties or subcategories. In addition to the process of open-coding, the researcher used axial-coding and created networks to show causal or associative conditions. Relationships that existed between categories within networks relevant to the perception of student involvement in SWPBS were revealed using axial coding. Categories, properties and associated properties were substantiated by the researcher’s observations (which included records of conversations) and participants’ quotes.

In this study, student involvement was the dependent variable and SWPBS, adult involvement, anti-bullying initiatives, interventions and outcomes were the independent variables. How the students made meaning of their interaction with the independent variables were described in the interpretations of student experiences as reported by adults and students.

As Creswell (1998) recommends, one should limit or collapse the number of categories to about five or six. In this study, seven major categories emerged representing student and teacher perceptions regarding student involvement in SWPBS. Through the use Atlas.ti 5.2, a qualitative data analysis software (Muhr, 2004), data were coded and
categories created to framework to organize the themes evolving from the data. Five categories were then networked or combined to describe what phenomena were experienced. To qualify under the what network, categories and individual properties provided a description of what participants observed in regard to specific phenomena, including activities relevant to interventions and/or outcomes. Phrases such as, “I saw” and “I have seen” assisted in determining if the categories or property fell under the what network.

Conceptually, representing participants’ experiences, the first network associated the following themes: **SWPBS supports**, **anti-bullying initiative**, **interventions**, **outcome evidence**, and **adult involvement and student involvement**. Adult involvement is included in this network since SWPBS was dependent upon this entity.

Subsequently, the how category emerged to described how students interpreted or made meaning of their own involvement as well as that of adults in SWPBS. In addition, this category described how adults interpreted or made meaning of their own, as well as student involvement. To be included, individual properties within categories needed to reflect someone’s perception. Phrases such as, “I think,” “I believe,” and “I feel” were used to help distinguish which categories and/or individual properties fell into the how network. In some cases, these phrases were used by a person, as he/she described an observation, which led to a classification in the what network. In addition to **adult and student involvement** relative to SWPBS, the second network included **adult** and **student interpretations** to conceptualize how participants’ experiences were transformed in consciousness (Patton, 2002).
The seven categories were networked semantically into two different diagrams as shown in Figures 3 and 4. Both networks share the same properties of SWPBS and student involvement, as data indicated that these two categories were foundational underpinnings in this study. Student involvement in SWPBS is the first network depicted and described in more detail below.

Figure 5: Student involvement in SWPBS – What phenomena were experienced?

Administrative Support

A situation that lent support to the SWPBS initiative was that the principal had prior experience as a behavioral consultant for the local Southeastern Ohio Regional Resource Center. The duties of this job required her to work with school districts to establish SWPBS through OISM initiatives focusing on school improvement. With such awareness of SWPBS, she felt confident that the Salzman program highly supported the
philosophy of SWPBS. The principal explained she was a trained facilitator in the use of SWIS and found the current system used by the district very similar.

*Salzman complements SWPBS*

The intervention school used a somewhat eclectic model; the Salzman (2007) program had been used district-wide. In addition to the Salzman program, the principal cited ‘Second Step’ and ‘Response to Intervention’ as complementary programs whose components were also being incorporated into practice. According to the principal and some teachers, the Salzman program was being implemented school-wide as well as in the classroom settings, and had very similar underpinnings to SWPBS. Teachers were using components of the Salzman program in the classroom and on an individual basis to meet the needs of their students.

However, observations indicated that the school-wide use of the Salzman program seemed non-existent. Primarily, Salzman encourages the introduction of school rules, proactive measures to encourage appropriate behavior, reward systems, and ways to monitor behavior. However, unlike SWPBS, it includes a level of consequences that can be used if a student challenges the rules. It was found that there was more reliance on the reactive components of Salzman as opposed to more proactive planning as prescribed by SWPBS. Evidence of this situation was reflected in the principal’s concern about the overuse of the reactive portion of Salzman.

Some teachers may be jumping to verbal reminders that are followed by negative consequences rather than using more proactive strategies of reminding students of
the procedures and praising accordingly. This also includes teachers using consequences that are not naturally or logically related to the behaviors.

The principal felt that if the Salzman program was effectively used, SWPBS would nicely complement the program and accentuate the positive that seemed to be bypassed at times. Additionally, she felt that SWPBS was actually missing a description of procedures to follow when rules are challenged, something the Salzman program provided. The principal's opinions are evidenced in the following remarks.

I see the Salzman program as one that complements SWPBS in that it encourages teachers to use the 'five rule process' in the classroom. This process includes the teacher to first redirect a student when off-task, then use proximity called 'hovering,' followed by eye-contact, with the last thing to be a verbal reminder. After these series of interventions, the teacher may use a first verbal warning with a student. This seems to be where SWPBS and Salzman differ, in that teachers can then use a scripted warning level that can progress to a note or phone call made to the home, possibly followed by the student visiting the office.

**Student and Teacher Involvement**

The principal felt strongly that regular teacher involvement was a must in addition to student involvement. She explained that student involvement is encouraged through district policy. Specially, the district policy states,

Students share responsibility for developing a climate in the school that is conducive to learning. Through participation in the decision-making process, students can be important resources for the improvement of the school, education
system, and the community. Periodically, students may be asked to review school polices, rules and regulations.

Further, the principal described a time when she found the students involvement in behavioral changes very beneficial and promoted a healthy learning climate. Students in chorus were out of control and the teacher needed help to regain their attention. I sat down with the class and teacher to set up a plan. The eighth grade students were able to articulate what they were doing that posed a problem in the class, as well as what they were willing to do to make things better for all involved. They also talked about what they felt the teacher should do that would make things run more smoothly. I felt this was a perfect example of students being able to participate actively in behavioral improvement initiatives.

Teacher involvement. Teacher involvement involved making suggestions as to which students they would recommend as good candidates for participation in the SWPBS planning. Statements included the following:

*Intervention specialist:* I recommended so many from every grade and they were all, I don’t know, they were all at least one participant in 7th grade, I think all 3 of them were in that group.

There are some kids, and you never know, you want to get kids, people who are looked up to even though they may not be exactly the role model but maybe the program can mold them.
Outside of SWPBS meetings, teachers were supportive of the program. Comments included opportunities where teachers served as mediators, and students were willing to come and talk about problems related to bullying.

*Intervention specialist:* We [Intervention specialist and students] took bullying behaviors, the sheet that you gave us, and we turned those around and made a little bulletin board up in the hall. It’s still up there and it says and friends do these things rather than bullies do these things. They turned them around. So that was just a real quick thing that they, to reinforce them more.

*4/5th grade teacher:* I’ve had more students talk to me about things that they have noticed and been witness to and more incidents directed towards them as far as some of the bullying things. So, you know, just an increase I think of the awareness.

A lack of teacher involvement was evident particularly at the onset of the project. Grade level teachers attended two of the four SWPBS meetings. Other meetings only had the principal and secretary in attendance. Teachers and the principal talked of their involvement or lack of involvement for a variety of reasons.

*Principal:* We have so many after-school activities that a lot of our teachers are involved in. So having them participate during the same time that we were meeting prohibited some of them from participating because they were teaching other classes. So I know that was part of our teacher participation issue.
I think that at our final gathering we had a little more teacher involvement that was very genuine and very meaningful. And even in light of the fact that the school was literally closing down as we were speaking, I think that showed a lot for them to come and participate and recognize those children and celebrate the work they had done.

Student involvement. Student involvement was evident from the beginning of the initiative. In four meetings all grade levels were represented by at least one student, with approximately six to eight students in attendance. Activities included devising a mission statement, examining ODR data from the first semester, and determining behaviors in most need of improvement. (See flow chart of events in chapter three). Communicating with each other in order to cooperate seemed to be of importance to them as evidenced in the mission statement created at the first meeting.

We the students and teachers of -------- elementary have important achievements and goals to become a stronger school community. With hope, dedication, and leadership we will talk and cooperate to succeed in life.

During the focus group interview, students seemed to reminisce about experiences relevant to SWPBS. One student commented about the importance of developing an appreciation for others’ commonalities as well as differences referencing the team building activity that took place during a SWPBS meeting. “[During a SWPBS meeting] we said words to describe how people treat each other and things like that.”

Additionally, specific activities were mentioned by students, such as the review of rules and disseminating information. Discussion led to the specific tasks they found
themselves planning and orchestrating. Student comments supported the intentions of increased communication written in the SWPBS mission statement.

“We discussed the rules and how you’re supposed to follow them.”

“We put up posters.”

“We made videos of pretend bullying and what to do when someone gets bullied.”

Adult responses included specific observations of phenomena that occurred related to the SWPBS anti-bullying initiative. These comments are also indicative of the support voiced by teachers and administration as they witnessed students being empowered to talk and work out problems with peers.

*Title One instructor:* I have seen them doing little projects around the school with [the principal] and I know that they have meetings where they, and the kids feel important when they go off to their little meetings to discuss their opinions I mean, which is very cool.

*Principal:* Well just kids talking about it. When we talked about the issues of bullying—making reference to the student presentations. Making references to the presentations and the things that happened during our meetings with the children.

*4/5th grade level teacher:* I think just more of the kids just being aware, talking to each other about it and being more forth coming and letting someone know that something inappropriate is going on I think that is what I’ve noticed most.

*Principal:* How to help themselves if they’re being bullied. How to report it, you know, those kinds of things. It would’ve been nice to be able to see the, you
know, the fruits of everybody’s labor. And I just don’t think we probably had enough data to yeah, time.

6, 7, 8th grade science teacher: I’ve seen them working, see I have witnessed them working through their problems, trying to listen better to each other. It’s been less physical and so I believe the kids have definitely put an effort into using their words instead of actions.

SWPBS Anti-bullying Sub-initiative

Students reflected on their direct involvement specific to the anti-bullying project. Again, a level of communication is shown in their comments. Observed phenomena specific to what students did relative to the SWPBS anti-bullying project included comments supportive of student involvement.

“[We] Talk[ed] to the other kids in the school [during classroom visits] about like not to bully and stuff.”

“[We] Talk[ed] about how bullying affects people.”

“Students in the classrooms came up with ideas as how people are bullied”

Teachers talked more generally about student involvement in SWPBS and the advantages that could be obtained with active student involvement in school initiatives.

Title One instructor: I think that what’ll be cool is that those kids have been indoctrinated in a little bit of bullying prevention that they can take to their new schools and now when they hear it or when they are a part of something in another school, they already have some of that groundwork.
6, 7, & 8th grade math/social studies teacher: I know the kids have latched on to the SWPBS thing and they were excited about it and stuff.

Title One instructor: So I think that we had some very cool kid-driven programming that included their involvement, which just helps with the discipline. Discipline needs decrease when kid’s involvement and engagement increases. I mean it’s just a direct correlation. So kids are helping you run this school and not something that is being managed like inmates, then their behavior problems go down.

Intervention specialist: They [the students] worked real well together and it gave them ownership.

Interventions

Evidence of interventions were mentioned by teachers as students orchestrated the classroom visits with adult guidance, attended SWPBS meetings, reviewed rules, and promoted school-wide incentives. During classroom visits, a bag with a face drawn on it was used to represent a person. As the bag was passed around, students in the classes were instructed to name a way someone is bullied. The principal and teachers commented about this situation.

Principal: Saying or doing hurtful things to another person takes no time at all. However, the damage may be done, even when we try to take back what we say. Also, see how long it takes someone to heal from hurtful actions or words.

Intervention specialist: …and by having the kids involved, it refreshens those rules every year even though they may be the same ones.
6, 7, & 8th grade social studies teacher: Things I observed were the classroom presentations, the after-school meetings, the posters that they, you know put up.

Principal: Students took initiative to do student presentations, to make, of course we had some staff helping also with making additional signage and also helping with some of the materials that we needed to get on top of that. The children did presentations. They were a part of making role playing videos which showed what children could do when bullied or when someone they knew was being faced with a bully. I guess I see that as the main things that the students were involved in.

It was also during the classroom presentations when students were invited to brainstorm ways that bullying could occur, that generalizations were made regarding the display of lack of respect as a type of bullying. Students voiced concerns about equal treatment from adults as they saw incidents of adults bullying students. The principal and researcher agreed that adults can bully and explained that adults can make mistakes, including teachers. In a conversation with the principal, she discussed how students can treat each other unjustly and say discriminatory things.

Students get in real trouble when they say the n word around here. It is not tolerated. We even had one child call someone the n word, he was referred to the office and find out later, his father said they may have some black heritage in their family.

During classroom visits, the concerns of being treated differently due to one’s cultural upbringing, what school you attended in the district, and gender were shared by
students. Particularly sixth through eighth grade students were very open about how these situations could be examples of bullying. The following is a conversation during one of the first SWPBS meetings when brainstorming types of bullying.

“People can be prejudice.”

“You get called names like the n word”

“Yeah, like those at --------- think those who go to --------- are dumb and stupid.

“Or, boys tell other boys how they are acting like a girl.”

“They call you a dumb blonde.”

“Or four-eyes.”

Outcomes

Outcomes that followed the implementation period of interventions were revealed in comments about a decrease in bullying incidents. Adult responses included specific observations of changes or improvements regarding the SWPBS anti-bullying initiative. In some cases, teachers reported that bullying had been on the decrease or students were being more discrete regarding this misbehavior. Teachers reported a calmer, more positive school atmosphere as students were observed talking with each other rather than reacting with physical confrontations. The following comments are indicative of the support voiced by teachers and administration as they witnessed students being empowered to work out problems with peers.

Student: “The bullying in the school has been going down. I haven’t seen hardly no bullying.”
Student: “People have been reading our posters that we set up and I seen a lot of people reading them, you know? And I haven’t seen very much bullying since our little support team and how we’ve getting things what they’re supposed to. And I actually see improvement in bullying and not bullying, stuff like that.”

Intervention specialist: “I think that bullying has become less of a problem. I think it’s still there but it’s not as blatant and inferred. If it’s still happening by those children they’ve learned to be sneakier about it. But I think it has decreased.”

6, 7, 8th grade science teacher: “But I believe there’s been a positive change with the kids have been getting along. And it might have to do with your program along with them banding together for this common fight.”

6, 7, 8th grade social studies teacher: “I mean I think the school attitude has improved, but I just hope that it carries over to the other schools. I mean I just, I would like to see them, you know, be positive when they go.”

Principal: “I think I saw heightened awareness among the children and a deeper understanding of what it entails. So I guess in a way I saw some of what I wanted to see. But given a longer amount of time I would’ve loved to have seen, you know, fewer discipline referrals based upon that and fewer children stating that this is an issue in our school, fewer fights and that kind of thing.”

Counselor: “I think it’s a calmer atmosphere this time of year then I would’ve expected it to be. And it feels calmer than it was when school started. And I’m sure the maturity has something to do with it, but I think whatever’s gone on here
they’ve taken to heart and students that, the students who have been involved in that program are students that are respected by the other students.”

4/5th grade level teacher: “In fourth and fifth grade we’ve had some, well particularly in the fourth, some big issues with the bullying and it seemed to have calmed down a little…”

Title One instructor: “I think probably the biggest thing that I have seen in changes because I know that we have had some different groups of kids in leadership positions, more leadership positions, is maybe their ability to talk intelligently about change because we went through some big changes with our board, and maybe some of the social skills that these kids have help them through the transition that they’re going through right now. And so, I think I saw kids that can speak better or maybe verbalize what they were feeling better and their opinions where before they might’ve been quiet.”
To better understand phenomena described by participants regarding their experiences, comments described how individuals interpreted student and/or teacher involvement. Essentially, data answered the question, how did the participants find value and meaning in those experiences? The following demonstrate student awareness that following the implementation of the SWPBS anti-bullying initiative.

“I think it’s getting to the teachers. Like, um they know now how much hurts us and how like every day we get bullied and stuff. And now some of the teachers might just keep attention in hallways and stuff for bullying.”

(Student talk about a time recently when bullying almost started)

“No. Miss --------- [art teacher] was there.”
“Teachers might it take it more seriously when we say things because of this program and realize how much people do get bullied. So, when you say things to each other they probably take it more seriously.”

Students were more open to the discussion of trying to understand the mind of a bully. Their comments showed evidence of perspective taking and empathy for students who have been active bullies.

“There are so many people that have beat him up this year.”

“I feel bad for him.”

“He’s actually pretty cool. I mean I talk to him.”

“I talk to him on the bus all the time. I mean I sit really close to him. I sit like a seat away from him on the bus. And I email him and stuff sometimes. I mean, he really, he tries. He really does. He just he has a hard time.”

“He doesn’t usually understand.”

Student “And I think he learns.”

“And I think when a person hit him you don’t understand what he’s going to do.”

Teachers’ reflections regarding the value of student involvement included commentary about the value of students being part of the decision-making process. In some cases, adults found student participation to be empowering especially since the students would all be going to different schools and needed a heightened sense of self-confidence.

Principal: Well I just felt that the student involvement was critical and I think that was something when we talked about getting together that my concern was that it
was all about what teachers had wanted in the past and my goal, one of my goals here as a principal was to bring in students because in the past my experiences taught me that if we allowed children to be a part of the process or also a part of the they can be more a part of the solution. So I really like student involvement aspect of it.

6, 7, 8th grade social studies teacher: I mean it’s always good to hear their insights and kind of get things from their point of view. Sometimes we’re fuddy-duddies according to them. You know we’re dinosaurs. We don’t know what’s going on or what’s popular or whatever. And so sometimes it’s good to get their point of view from certain things not just fashion or popularity but also what they value in school.

Title One instructor: They [the students] are their own government and they become their own rule makers. And they tend to be harder on themselves then we are when given the chance to choose punishments. And so you know when and when they are part of the solution rather than being governed like a population of people who can’t think, then you get a population of people who can’t think. I’m all about self-fulfilling prophecy and if you tell kids how great they can be and they will be that.

6, 7, 8th grade science teacher: Hopefully they’ve learned enough through this process where they will make the right decision. And I always tell kids that’s what character is, when nobody’s watching and you do the right thing, that’s what your true character is.
Principal: I just feel that the kids are better prepared now. All of them are better prepared. Even if they don’t know exactly what to do, they know there are things you can do and I think it’s empowered students, hopefully, throughout the entire school. I just feel very, very positive about that.

6, 7, 8th grade social studies teacher: I mean I think the school attitude has improved, but I just hope that it carries over to the other schools. I mean I just, I would like to see them, you know, be positive when they go.

Principal: I just feel really, really good about it. And I think that it was your work that made a huge impact on that in terms of allowing the children to a part of the collaborative problem solving process.

Title One instructor: I think they’ve been empowered in a way that what they say is important and because of a lot of what they said was put into we, you know, used it as a part of the process. So now I think they know that they have a voice. And that was part of my concern was that children felt they had a voice. You know, that it wasn’t about principals and teachers making the rules and we don’t have a choice on this. So I think that hopefully they’ve gained a feeling of that you have a voice. And they share that information- hey we can make a difference, let’s try.

Discussion included concerns from teachers about the short amount of time that was spent on the SWPBS initiative since the first SWPBS meeting took place in mid-March and school ended at the end of May. More teacher commitment to the SWPBS and positive changes could have continued, if the school was not closing and more time was
designated to the project. However, comments such as the following were made regarding the actual time devoted to the initiative.

_Counselor:_ So I’m so glad they have that program and they’ve had some curriculum, too. The timing couldn’t have been better cause it’s sending them out with it and they’ve had good stuff. I think that’ll help them move on as much as anything.

In conclusion, the coded themes in this study had the common focal point to student involvement. Like the hub of a wheel, student involvement is central and dependent to all interactions. Adult and student interpretation, the activities of SWPBS such as selected interventions and outcomes, and adult involvement all interface or connect as the spokes of the wheel. The wheel keeps turning as adults and students keep becoming more experienced and resourceful team members. This resourcefulness and experience allows the wheel to turn more smoothly as students become empowered and adults and students establish stronger relationships.
CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

This study addressed a series of questions specific to student involvement in SWPBS. The first question asked about the current level of student involvement in the SWPBS process. The literature depicted little student involvement in SWPBS, mostly consisting of peripheral student participation such as involvement in the implementation of the intervention stage in the SWPBS process. This peripheral level of involvement was observed early on in the current study when the researcher observed students as the recipients of interventions initially in place, such as the use of the Very Important Person (VIP) book and school-wide award incentives. Administratively chosen, some school improvement initiatives were being implemented district-wide, including SWPBS, the Salzman program, Making Middle Grades Work (MMGW), and a Comprehensive Continuous Improvement Plan (CCIP). None of these programs included active student involvement as proposed in this study. Ironically, student involvement was supported by district policy under section A of “Foundations and Basic Commitments.”

The study’s second question asked what unique factors must be considered when adding student involvement to SWPBS. Unique factors to be considered when adding student involvement to SWPBS included first and foremost commitment from administration, teachers, parents, and students. Obtaining commitment through parent consent and student assent is of high importance. Teachers can demonstrate the value of student involvement and support it through their active participation. Of course, administrative support is essential, as a principal can oversee activities and plans made by
the SWPBS team. Since the traditional SWPBS implementation requires students’ behavior to be the subject of improvement, a change in the overall SWPBS outcome-based process needs to be considered. Knowing that referral data alone is not an accurate measure of improvement of student behavior, it was necessary to include qualitative means of inquiry. Additionally, the use of an intervention and control school in this study was essential to address reliability issues.

The third question posed by the current study addressed the positive and negative outcomes of student involvement in SWPBS. In this study, as indicated by the qualitative data, the positive outcomes outweighed the negative. Based upon adult responses to improvements in school climate, it was evident that students were more aware of school-wide behavioral expectations. Student involvement in the SWPBS anti-bullying initiative provided representation for the entire student body and appropriate influences to encourage appropriate behavior. Positive outcomes were also evident in teacher behavior, as students reported more supportive interactions between students and adults.

Establishing a mission statement, reviewing rules and procedures, planning interventions, and determining school-wide incentives specific to anti-bullying, seemed to refresh in everyone’s minds the responsibilities each person has in maintaining a school climate conducive to learning.

One negative aspect or challenge that student involvement in SWPBS posed is that not all students are able to respond to universal interventions. Students with chronic behavioral issues may need more intensive supports in addition to the universal assistance. Also, adherence to confidentiality is crucial when the SWPBS team examines
office referral data. Measures taken by adults to limit Office Discipline Referral (ODR) information to aggregate school-wide reports are imperative.

The fourth question posed by this study addressed the effectiveness of student and adult developed interventions. Developing interventions that are supportive of outcome measures is of great importance. In line with Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Schunk, 1996), students as young as age ten, with adult assistance, can make data-based decisions and plan and facilitate interventions. Improvements in school-wide behavior can be attributed to team planning, development, and implementation of interventions as was evidenced in the triangulation of data collection methods.

ODR were examined in two ways and provided an indirect measure of the dependent variable of overall ODR and incidents of fighting and bullying. First, the overall number of ODR was compared between third and fourth nine weeks for both schools. The examination of ODR from the third and fourth nine-week periods demonstrated more promising results for the intervention school. When the 50% of referrals from the one outlier were included in the total number of referrals, the intervention school showed a decrease of referrals of 6% during the last nine weeks. Between the third to the last nine-week period of the year, the control school reported a 60% decrease in the number of overall ODRs. Second, the specific incidents of fighting and bullying compared between the third and fourth nine-week periods were examined at both schools. The control school showed an increase of 50% in fighting and bullying from the third to the fourth nine weeks. Respectively, the intervention school had a 25% increase in fighting and bullying during the same period. Fighting and bullying showed
an increase in both schools, however, the intervention school’s percentage of increase in bullying was less than that of the control school. This is noteworthy since the intervention school has been earmarked in the district as being the school that served the highest number of students with challenging behaviors.

Comparing percentages of ODR between schools does not provide conclusive results that active student involvement in SWPBS had an impact on the number of referrals reported. However, in triangulation with interview data and ODR data, consistency was evident in the decrease in referrals and reports from teachers and students indicating fewer school-wide behavior problems.

The selection of the intervention and control schools in this study was based upon criteria including the prior implementation of SWPBS, regular adult involvement in SWPBS, and the use of SWIS (School-wide Information System) to monitor and report ODR data. Of these three criteria, the control school had all components present as they had gone through SWPBS training the previous year. At that time, the school was also using the Salzman program district-wide. As with the intervention school, SWPBS was infused with the use of the Salzman program. The control school also used FileMaker for ODR monitoring and reporting.

**Supports and Non-Supports for SWPBS**

Supports for SWPBS reported at the beginning of the study varied between the control and intervention school. Unfortunately, the intervention school did not have formal training in SWPBS as did the control school. In a study of the psychometric characteristics of SET scores collected from 13 schools; 11 elementary and two middle
schools in the Pacific Northwest, Horner et al. (2004) found a pre-assessment average of 47.9% and a post-assessment average of 83.6%. In comparison, the SET score of 67% obtained in this study from the intervention school was below the post-assessment average of 83.6%, yet above the pre-assessment average. These results are consistent with the status of SWPBS at the intervention school as some components of SWPBS were clearly in place and others were in need of development. The components not in place included the absence of a SWPBS team that met regularly and no visual signage of school-wide rules and procedures. However, the researcher did find through the SET assessment that the intervention school’s use of the Salzman program included provisions similar to SWPBS, such as school-wide rules, proactive methods of reinforcing behaviors, and school-wide incentives.

The SET assessment also determined the use of FileMaker to efficiently and effectively provide the necessary archival data. Therefore, with information gleaned from the SET assessment, the researcher felt the intervention and control sites to be appropriate for this study. Since one required component of this study was active student involvement in SWPBS and the school district had a policy that required student involvement, the selection of these schools also made sense. The control school had results of a SET assessment, but regrettably despite repeated requests, results were not made available to the researcher for comparison.

Since the intervention school did not receive formal training, regular meetings of a SWPBS team did not occur. During the SET interview process, staff spoke of weekly meetings of all teachers to discuss school issues, but not in a formalized SWPBS process.
Therefore, the intervention school did not have a full year of SWPBS and subsequently full implementation of SWPBS occurred, concurrent with active student involvement.

Teacher involvement was lacking in the study, particularly during the first few meetings. The principal and secretary were the only adult representatives during these times. Later meetings and classroom visits included teacher involvement, but these took place toward the end of the study. Had the study been allotted more time and the school not closing, teacher commitment may have been more readily seen.

Active supports included the principal’s enthusiastic and wholehearted participation in the study and implementation of student involvement in SWPBS, as well as her own personal experience as a trained SWPBS behavioral consultant. See figure 5 below depicting supports and non-supports of SWPBS with student involvement.
Supports and non-supports of SWPBS student involvement.

*Figure 7: Supports and non-supports of SWPBS student involvement.*

**Adult Involvement**

The success of active student involvement requires the active support of teachers and administration (Furtwengler, 1996). In this study it was quite clear that administratively, the initiation of active student involvement was supported through district requirements as well as the personal interest of the principal. However, with limited active teacher involvement, student involvement might not have reached its full potential.
Comments made by students did not indicate any correlation between the level of student involvement and lack of teacher participation. Instead, students spoke of their teachers being supportive and always willing to listen. This may have been the perception held by the students before the study was conducted, but is impossible to determine upon reflection. The principal expressed her interest in having certain individuals serve on the SWPBS team, however, when it came for the first meeting, no teachers were in attendance. More active teacher involvement could have occurred if there had been more time to commit to the SWPBS anti-bullying initiative and the prospects of the school remaining open were definite. Understandably, teachers were overwhelmed with the threat of the school closing and having to find new teaching positions. Teachers seemed to offer their support in more peripheral ways, as they were able to accommodate classroom visits and attend some SWPBS meetings later in the process.

As a result, the SWPBS anti-bullying program seemed to be more of a student-lead initiative with direct support from the principal and researcher, as one teacher commented “…they [the students] kind of latched onto the SWPBS thing and it was kind of like a thing that they you know took under their wing ….” The lack of available time devoted to the SWPBS project had a direct impact on teacher involvement as more participation was seen towards the end of the school year.

Student Involvement

Student involvement was highly supported by the principal and teachers. A heightened sense of self was evident for students recommended to serve on the SWPBS team. Support was evident as teachers allowed these students to be excused from class.
Such actions taken by the adults to select students that represented the diversity of the school promoted a sense of belongingness, especially since some students were at-risk of behavioral and academic challenges and/or displayed potential leadership abilities. To further ensure a reliable selection, the principal checked for representation of the student body.

**Belongingness and connectedness.** In addition to the importance of teachers’ recommendations, they also spoke about the importance of students feeling a sense of belongingness and connectedness to their school. This is consistent with the literature as Goldman & Newman (1998) advised that a sense of belongingness can aid in an individual’s perception of empowerment. At times, this belongingness was threatened by prejudice acts and racist comments made among students. Concerns were voiced by the administration regarding tension among students promoted by racism and prejudice. Specifically, at the intervention school, the principal spoke of students using racial slurs and getting into fights over such situations. With this mind, the researcher found it necessary to delve into the theoretical, cognitive basis of self-identity relevant to perceived discrimination and prejudice.

Brown and Bigler (2005) outlined that cognitive abilities encompass cultural and social cognition. Specifically, cultural cognition involves the child’s “evolving awareness of race” as a child’s initial understanding of differences focusing on distinct behaviors and characteristics to those less obvious, more ambiguous qualities or features.

Students were involved in conversations during classroom visits and spoke of situations when bullying involved someone being prejudiced. Students talked about the
views of others regarding their school population and that known bullying involved being treated unfairly by other students in the district. Students examined commonalities and differences that can be appreciated when working together in a group. Time made to talk about these commonalities or differences supports what Brown and Bigler recommended (2005) regarding how the knowledge of the perceptions of others’ and individual differences can proactively be used to teach children alternative ways to cope with discrimination.

*Self-identity.* Teachers’ comments were also supportive of student involvement as it promoted positive *self-identity* and self-worth for individuals. When conflict occurs, or when identities are not verified, a person may be motivated to lessen the distress by referring back to the checks and balance of a comparator. A comparator is a term coined by Cast and Burke, (2002) describing an individual’s superego. If and when distress is lessened, then self-esteem can be impacted in a positive sense as an outcome of “successful self-verification.” Cast and Burke propose that a person’s self-esteem is most vulnerable when he/she is excluded from a social situation or group. They suggest self-esteem plays a role in the development of “self-verification.” The authors describe self-verification as occurring when “meanings in the social situation match or confirm meanings in an identity. They offer an analogy that self-esteem is like a “reservoir of energy,” further suggesting that the reservoir of self-esteem can be built up, but when used, it is lost. The buildup of this reservoir occurs when a person experiences opportunities of success and accomplishments that are aligned with positive self-growth. They feel it is important to keep the reservoir of self-esteem and resources full to help
individuals through such circumstances. Identifying with others and establishing relationships help individuals verify their own identity.

*Security and safety.* Student focus group responses revealed a level of security and safety unique to their school environment. These responses seemed indicative of how much students appreciated their close-knit, school community and communicated perspectives students had regarding their teachers. This sense of security may have been well-in-place before this study however; it could have been heightened with the establishment of SWPBS and the anti-bullying initiative.

Additionally, students spoke of support from teachers in the SWPBS project that further provided a sense of security. Students discussed a decrease in bullying in the school, which may have added to their feeling security and safety. Twemlow, Fonagy, and Sccao (2002) explain that developmentally, children in grades four through seven forfeit the image of protective parenting as they become aware of peer and group pressures. When bullying becomes prominent in this environment, students can experience the harmful and negative effects of fearing for their sense of safety. Twemlow et al. believe it is essential that teachers develop “children’s feelings of involvement with the teaching staff…” (p. 332).

*Empowerment.* Teachers made comments regarding students’ ability to be leaders and self-govern, indicative of support for student involvement within a school environment. When feelings of safety, security, and belongingness are fostered in a school environment, students may more readily respond to opportunities of involvement in decision making. These opportunities can foster empowerment for students. Goldman
and Newman (1998) explain that empowerment is an underlying need of all people. Needs directly impacted by empowerment include survival, security, power, and belongingness. Goldman and Newman propose that once students are empowered, they will have the intrinsic motivation to take ownership of their school communities and make subsequent changes or improvements. Teachers and administration in this study made observations of such activity involving students’ active membership in the SWPBS initiative. Their commentary included observations of students talking out problems and making more responsible decisions.

In addition to comments made by teachers, students spoke of situations in which they would understand or try to understand another person’s perspective. This included the perspective of a school bully. Brown and Bigler (2002) refer to “perspective taking” when defining social cognition. In this situation, children can acquire the ability to not only recognize that others may think differently, but also make conjectures about the content of the views or thoughts of others. Brown and Bigler explain that as early as five years old, children can “recognize that the unique beliefs of others may direct their choices or actions” (p. 541). Students’ reactions to behaviors of a known bully indicated a level of empathy, as they discussed the difficulties he has had and how they may be due to his dysfunctional family situation.

Discrepancies. Comments gleaned from adult and student interview data indicated positive outcomes regarding a decrease in bullying school-wide and a “calmer atmosphere.” However, ODR data contradicted the qualitative data and showed an increase in referrals during the fourth grading period. It was also found that
insubordination and threatening, harassment and bullying accounted for most of the referrals during that time. So, why such a discrepancy between those two sets of data? Based upon referral data, individual student reports indicated that one student was responsible for 50% of the referrals during the fourth grading period. This student was also suspended for the last two weeks of the school year due to aggressive behavior. Such events are not surprising as Sugai and Lewis (1999) commented that students with challenging behaviors need more intensive supports that can be communicated through a BIP (Behavior Improvement Plan), as they commonly do not respond to universal supports such as those implemented in this study.

Interventions/Outcomes

Interventions selected were unique to this study as the SWPBS team chose bullying as their focus. Visits to all eight classrooms in the school consisted of using a topical agenda with scripted dialogue for adults and students to follow. This allowed the researcher to maintain consistency between each classroom presentation. In addition to classroom presentations, school rules were revisited by the team posted throughout the school. Students that served on the team made reference to seeing other students reading posters, which provided a level of importance, justification, and ownership to their involvement. Corbett and Wilson (1995) explained that focal information should be used to encourage all students, teachers, and parents to reflect on the process and consequently act accordingly.

An increase in signatures in the VIP book at the intervention school and a decrease in the accountability book were noted between the third and fourth nine week
periods. One reason for the lack of use of the VIP book may be that students were
couraged to report bullying and if they did, their name would be added to the VIP
book. However, students on the SWPBS team reported that students in the school were
apprehensive to report incidences of bullying for fear of being targeted. On the same
note, a decrease in the number of bullying incidences was reported as individuals chose
not to bully or incidents of bullying went unnoticed.

Overall, the number of ODR decreased in the intervention school between the
third and fourth grading periods. Data depicted in graphic form, show a steady increasing
trend in referrals from the first to the third grading periods. A decrease in the number of
overall referrals was noted for the last nine weeks, which could be indicative of the
effects of interventions implemented during that period. However, a slight increase from
the third to the fourth nine weeks was observed in the ODR specific to bullying incidents.
Increases in bullying incidents could be accounted for by the increased awareness of
teachers regarding bullying behaviors and therefore they were more likely to report these
occurrences. This awareness may have been supported by the team approach assumed by
teachers in the school. Therefore, teachers may have been more willing to report
incidents of bullying. If there were situations of unwillingness to report incidents of
bullying, teachers may have done so to avoid reporting bullying incidents specific to
those students from higher SES income levels. This apprehensiveness from teachers may
have been due to the fear of repercussions from more prominent families.

According to interview data, no incidents of bullying were reported by students
during the last nine weeks of the school year. This was also supported by the fact that no
student signed the VIP book when incidences of bullying may have witnessed and reported. Therefore, increase incidents in bullying in the school were only reported by adults. Important to note is that ODR data showed one student was responsible for 50% of referrals during this time and, as a result of this pattern of behavior, was suspended the last week of school.

Recommendations

Student involvement in any school is readily available. However, ample time must be available and teacher commitment must be established before the process of SWPBS with active student involvement begins. In practice, teachers and administrators must whole-heartedly plan for the full implementation of student involvement in SWPBS teams.

As in this study and suggested in the literature, recommendations from teachers for student representation in SWPBS initiative was highly beneficial. Furthermore, these recommendations reflected the diversity of the school body, including students who are at-risk of academic or behavioral challenges. It is also recommended that parental involvement be considered (Goldman & Newman, 1998). With ample time and planning, the SWPBS team can involve parents by disseminating information about their functions and activities to improve school climate. As a school hosts an open house to encourage parent involvement, information about the SWPBS with student involvement can be disseminated.

Sugai and Horner (1999) recommended the number of school staff and faculty committed to SWPBS must be at least 80%. Therefore, time must be set aside to explain
the purpose and long-term benefits of student involvement. In the current study, the process was rushed and teacher involvement was not obtained well-in-advance of implementation. It is evident in the literature (Furtwengler, 1996) that school reform initiatives that include student involvement have to be planned, given sufficient time, and resources. Teacher interview data indicated a common concern regarding the lack of time made available to SWPBS with student involvement. Teachers would have been more committed to the initiative proposed, had more time been available.

It is highly recommended that students be given equal voice in decision making and planning. Since teacher involvement was lacking at the onset of this study, commentary from teachers indicated that this was more of a student-led project. This somewhat backward process of a student-led SWPBS initiative may have helped avoid the potential feeling that students were recipients of an adult-initiated school reform program. Corbitt and Wilson (1995) suggest student perceptions of being “participants” rather than “beneficiaries” is very dependent upon the success of them feeling authentically empowered (p. 13). However, it is necessary for students and adults to have equal partnership in the process. As adults become actively involved, all participants can perceive the genuine interest in supporting positive changes in school climate. In this study, the level of team building between adults and students was lacking. More time allocated to this part of the process would encourage students and teachers to develop stronger relationships and membership in the SWPBS team (Furtwengler, 1996).

In this study, treatment fidelity regarding interventions used were determined by those best practices found in the literature regarding the appropriate prevention and
reaction methods used to cope with bullying in school settings. Based upon CEC policies regarding bullying and creating safe climates in school, the program used in this study, *Empowering Bystanders* (Davis and Davis, 2007) was found to be highly aligned with those policies.

Recommendations applicable to the replication of a research study should further address treatment fidelity. To support the use of mixed methods, specifically the quantitative aspects of a study, the use of direct methods of observation are recommended. The use of direct observation would allow the researcher to triangulate data with the indirect measure of ODR that otherwise may not establish a functional relationship between dependent and independent measures. This level of triangulation of the quantitative and qualitative data would alleviate any concerns of subjectivity and researcher bias that may be inherent to qualitative methods of data collection, such as participant observations and interviews.

In this study, the researcher was involved in the selection and implementation of the intervention. As noted, the team of teachers and students chose to conduct classroom visits to cover essential points and ways to intervene and prevent bullying. Each person, including the researcher, had scripted roles to follow which allowed consistency in the implementation of the intervention and further supported treatment fidelity.

The intervention used in this study was implemented school-wide. A recommendation to consider would be to determine more targeted interventions for students who exhibit more chronic bullying behaviors. This involvement could include their participation in team planning or to assist in determining and designing more
personalized interventions. Measurements of the impact of behavioral improvement on achievement for all students could include the use of value added or achievement scores in pre- and post-intervention phases.

Another recommendation, aligned with SWPBS practices, is to determine current levels of SWPBS, through the use of the SET assessment. This is especially critical, since it gives the researcher a standard baseline to make comparisons between intervention and control schools. Obtaining SET scores from both schools would have provided the researcher with a global picture of current practices of SWPBS and allowed for comparability. Additionally, having grade level data for comparison when examining ODR would be helpful, as that was not possible in this study.

Continued use of graphic displays of school-wide data in the form of histograms is recommended for future research in this area as it can easily and readily assist the team in targeting a school location and/or problematic behavior(s). Particularly during the planning stage of this study, when data were examined and concerns prioritized, a high level of student voice and opinion was available. Prioritized and selected problematic behaviors in addition to planned interventions were very much student-directed. As recommended in the literature (Cook-Sather, 2002), “…students should be active creators of their knowledge, rather than recipients” (p. 2). Additionally, the authors suggest that student involvement can expand beyond the classroom and involve “adult-generated topics” (p. 2) with direct implications for students. Students can readily be involved in a constructivist manner when participating in educational reform. Therefore, to better aid
in the purpose of student empowerment, the constructivist approach should be used when planning and implementing SWPBS.

Using SWPBS allows the team to tackle an important concern of improved school-wide behavior, rather than non-essential, meaningless tasks. Improving school-wide behavior has direct implications for students and adults. Generally speaking, students in this study found that showing respect to one another was a reciprocal relationship between adults and students. Students felt a lack of respect, in a sense, was a form of bullying. In this study, it was found that students voiced concerns about equal treatment from adults as they saw incidents of adults bullying students. These findings were consistent with the literature, as students at this age may readily question the fairness in the treatment of others, particularly when it involves them (Kohlberg, 1981).

Therefore, a more global view of respect for all can be a focus for future research. Future research can also include measures to improve class-wide behaviors, as much of what happens in the non-classroom settings can carry over into the classroom.

Conclusion

In conclusion, time was of the essence in this study. Had more time been allocated to this research, more adult participation could have occurred. Additional time would have allowed the SWPBS team to monitor interventions and continue to develop or change plans via data-based decisions. But, to say that all that was done, was done without purpose or productivity would not reflect the results of this study. It is impossible to measure the magnitude of empowerment that was instilled in each student,
for those who directly or indirectly participated in this project. However, based on teachers’ comments, they felt students were better prepared for change.

Unique to this study and due to financial circumstances was the inevitable school closures and district consolidation. The intervention school and one other neighboring school were forced to close. Students and teachers found themselves moving into other schools within the district. The control school and others in the district received the overflow from these two schools. In this situation, district consolidation has added the challenge of overcrowded schools and higher teacher/student ratios. During the time that teachers and students were adjusting to the idea of their school closing and having to move elsewhere, this project may have made the transition smoother. Even under such situations, it is very apparent that student involvement in SWPBS is feasible and can show positive outcomes in the improvement of school-wide behaviors.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

Pilot Study

This section describes the SWPBS process used during the first year of implementation at a rural middle school. First, a description of the SWPBS process used by teachers and administrators in the school is provided and changes based on the experience will be outlined. Second, the use of additional qualitative and quantitative measures will be proposed. This includes standardized measures of results from needs assessment, direct observation data collection and analysis, observations and interviews. Patton (2002) explains quantitative and qualitative methods involve differing strengths and weaknesses that can complement each other and furthermore provide for triangulation of data. Finally, discussion and implications for practice are shared.

Methods

*Design and Procedures.* This study took place in a rural middle school in southeastern, Ohio. The middle school served students, sixth through eighth grade who live in a one county area. The student population at the school consisted of a 98% Caucasian and 2% African-American and Hispanic enrollment. Of the student population, 47.5% were female and 52.5% were male, and 16.7 of the students are identified and receive special education services. The teaching staff at the school consisted of 71% females and 29% males. Except for a school police officer that is African American, the teaching staff, administrative personnel and certified staff are all Caucasian. The school serves over 950 students in grades sixth through eighth grade. There were approximately 60 faculty and staff, with approximately 40 teachers and two administrators, one principal
and one assistant principal. The following measures were used in this pilot study: 1) needs assessment of school personnel, 2) pre and post measures of targeted behaviors through direct observation, 3) participant observation during targeted times, 4) semi-structured interviews with seven randomly selected students. These will be further discussed in the following sections.

*Initiation of Program* Due to an overall need for school improvement and determining more proactive methods in discipline at the school, the principal and assistant principal were interested in teachers and administration participating in staff development through SWPBS. Initially, teachers and administrators were introduced to the school-wide positive behavior support through the use of Project PREPARE (Proactive, Responsive, Empirical, and Proactive Alternatives in Regular Education) from the University of Oregon (1994). Project PREPARE provided a format for staff development when implementing positive behavior supports on a school-wide level. It allowed teachers to identify those behaviors that were expected of students. PREPARE also helped staff to develop ways that these behaviors can be taught, proactively reinforced, and assessed through data based measures. This study was supported through a state improvement grant and facilitated by local university faculty. Entry was obtained by finding a school that found interest in making such improvements and offering graduate credit for those participants. Initially, university personnel provided staff with an overview of development and implementation of SWPBS systems. The overview consisted of participation incentives and a definition and description of SWPBS including the functions of a behavior support team.
Needs Assessment To begin the process of implementing this program, the staff was asked to complete a needs assessment (Lewis & Sugai, 1999) to determine a priority area in the school in most need of support (Assessment instrument and results are shown in Appendices A and B). Thirty-nine staff and faculty out of 55 (not including certified staff such as secretaries, custodians, etc.) completed the inventory, which was about 70% of the school personnel. The individuals that did complete the survey included teachers from sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. Administrative personnel including principals, a school psychologist, and a behavioral specialist also completed surveys. This survey consisted of assessing classroom, non-classroom, school-wide, and individual systems. Staff members were asked to determine the status of features in each of these systems and determine if they are in place or not in place. The staff was also asked to rank order improvement priorities for each feature. For example, a feature under non-classrooms systems included: staff receives regular opportunities for developing and improving active supervision skills.

Data from the needs assessment (Lewis & Sugai, 1999) were aggregated into two different categories, current status of systems and improvement priority of the systems. The current status of behavioral support systems were ranked based on a numerical value rating system indicating (1) a system not in place, (2) a system partially in place, and (3) a system in place. Results showed the greatest deficit in individual student systems in place with a mean of 1.68, followed by school-wide systems ($\bar{x} = 1.93$), non-classroom ($\bar{x} = 1.95$), and classroom systems ($\bar{x} = 2.35$).
Improvement priorities by system were ranked based upon a numerical rating system indicating (1) low priority, (2) medium priority and (3) high priority. Results showed individual student systems (M = 2.43) high priority, school-wide (M = 2.19) medium priority and classroom systems (M = 2.10), and non-classroom setting systems (M = 2.10), both having a low priority ranking. Based upon these results, individual student systems were rated the highest priority by the staff. Survey results also indicated individual student systems were least in place and appeared to be most in need of development.

_Determination of Priority System_ The results of this assessment assisted university consultants to facilitate discussion among staff regarding those systems in place or not in place. Staff was split into four groups to examine each system. Groups recorded the three highest improvement priority features least in place for each of the systems. Ironically, the data from the assessment determined that individual student systems were in most need of improvement or change and were least in place. Through further dialogue among the staff and a majority consensus obtained, it was found that non-classroom systems were preferred priority area in most need of improvement. The university consultants felt it was important for the teachers to be able to use the needs assessment as a tool to promote discussion, and not be the sole determinant in the decision-making process.

The next step in the training process required the staff and faculty to develop positively stated school-wide rules. After examination of examples of school-wide rules developed in other schools, the staff established their own. Their established rules
included: be respectful and cooperative, be safe and orderly, be honest and responsible, and be kind and considerate. After school-wide rules were written, settings were rank-ordered and prioritized into hallways, cafeteria, arrival and dismissal times, restrooms and lockers. Behavioral expectations were developed in groups by having each setting examined separately. Staff developed behavioral expectations framed in positive, succinct words to compliment school-wide rules. The staff as a whole approved all expectations written for these settings. Using an example in the literature (Lewis & Garrison-Harrell, 1999), staff later composed a grid depicting rules, prioritized settings, and behavioral expectations for each setting (See Appendix B). This grid became a working document for staff to refer to and was later used by the SWPBS team as a guide to develop instructional plans to teach expected behaviors. The grid was found to be invaluable not only because it was developed by the entire staff participating in the SWPBS, but also served as a document that the team continually revisited when making decisions. It was later determined during SWPBS team meetings that any revisions of this document should be brought before the entire staff for approval.

Development of SWPBS Team With assistance from university consultants, a positive behavior support team was formed. This team consisted of a teacher from each grade-level, three special education teachers, the principal, school psychologist, and the behavior specialist for the school district. The involvement of the special educators, the school psychologist and the behavioral specialist reflect the overall need to implement supportive systems not only for students with typical needs, but those students with exceptionalities. Of the 973 students at the school, 16.7 percent are identified as having
exceptionalities. Horner, et al (2004) explained that school-wide supports that are planned and implemented for all students can benefit those students with more intense academic and behavioral needs as well.

The team decided to hold bimonthly after school meetings that would run for no more than 45 minutes. In addition to identifying who was on the team, team members chose roles, which included a facilitator, secretary, and timekeeper. As explained by Lewis et al. (2002) the team should determine if any changes are necessary in current routines, assess the physical environment for any needed adjustments, identify expected behaviors, and develop ways to teach expected behaviors in those settings. Initially, the team determined the most problematic time in the hallways occurred before lunch when students were dismissed from class. The team discussed changes in the routines, such as staggering students out of classrooms to hallways when exiting for lunch.

_Devlopment of Hallway Plan_ Using an example of an instructional plan from Project Prepare from the University of Oregon (1994), the team developed a plan for teaching hallway behavior. This plan consisted of reinforcing expected hallway behaviors such as walking in halls, using appropriate language, keeping hands and feet to one’s self, and using a quiet voice. The staff chose these expectations as they considered problematic behaviors that consistently occurred in the hallways. Interventions included a first step, which involved discussing the SWPBS plan, and sharing school rules and behavioral expectations for hallways during an extended homeroom time in which character-building activities were used with students. This seemed to be a very appropriate time to teach expected school behaviors. The second step of the instructional
plan was to teach the expected behaviors. Interventions consisted of reminders or pre-corrections, corrections, positive reinforcement, the use of catch’em being good tickets (which were already used in the school to recognize appropriate behavior), and active supervision (Colvin, Sugai, Good & Lee, 1997; Lewis, Colvin & Sugai, 2000; Lewis & Garrison-Harrell, 1999). Students were also reminded to walk along the wall, given “speeding tickets” by pulling students out and letting them wait until the end of the line, shadowing those students who needed direct supervision, and having students re-walk when necessary. During an after school meeting with staff and faculty, the SWPBS team shared this plan. They explained how essential it would be to be visible in the hallways during the intervention phase. It was explained that teachers would use homeroom time to review expected behaviors with students. All team members seemed to be very persuasive in the necessity of all staff participating in this plan. Dates were provided for the start of the intervention phase.

Reminders were sent out in teacher’s mailboxes prior to the initiation of the SWPBS plan. Before the teachers were to begin with the interventions, the team explained they were to carry on as normal. With the help from university consultant, the team devised a baseline data collection plan. This consisted of a four-day observation period. Eight undergraduate students from the local university collected frequency data. Behaviors targeted to be observed included running, jumping, cursing, and pushing. These behaviors were observed during a hallway transition from class to the cafeteria for all three-grade levels. Each grade had separate lunch periods. With input from the team, four problematic areas were identified in the building for the observers to position
themselves. To obtain interrater reliability, two observers stood side-by-side in each of these areas. Observers were instructed to only look in a certain area of the hallway so as not to duplicate what someone else might observe. Each observer was given an observation tool, which defined behaviors being observed. Tally marks were made each time a behavior was observed.

Several confounding variables were taken into consideration when examining those data. First, a heightened display of some behaviors may have occurred due to students being observed, which otherwise may not have occurred. Also, teachers were inconsistent in the use of interventions. Teachers were asked by the SWPBS team to “be visible” and enter into hallways after students were dismissed from class. Some teachers were seen doing this, while others were not. It also cannot be determined who actually used pre-correction or reminders with their students before they were dismissed from class. During a final staff-wide SWPBS meeting, the data collected were shared with the staff by the SWPBS team.

Also, observation procedures needed to be better designed. The observers were not well trained in knowing which behaviors specifically constituted a tally mark. Behaviors were observed in a trial data collection process, which would better visually define the behaviors for the observers. The observation tool used also posed some problems since it did not provide specific areas or marked boxes to mark and in-close tally strikes for observed behaviors. It was found that observers sometimes differed in their process of marking tallies for behaviors, since they interpreted the areas for recording tallies differently. This didn’t pose a problem later in tabulation of raw data
once the pattern of recording was determined. It would be recommended that a practice run be instituted, with defined behaviors and a reliable observation tool. During practice data collection proceedings, one could then make necessary changes as seen fit.

*Interviews* In addition to the direct observation, interviews were conducted during student arrival time at the school. Although all students interviewed were randomly selected the sample was limited to students in seventh grade, specifically two female and six male students, all were Caucasian (The school is made up of a 98.3% Caucasian student body with specifically 10 African Americans and two Hispanic students.). This unequal representation of students was due to students approaching the interviewer, volunteering to talk after the first student was interviewed.

Bogdan & Biklen (1998) explained that the goal of a researcher is to increase subjects’ level of comfort and to encourage interviewees to talk. To gain entry and make the students feel comfortable, it was explained that the interviewer was former teacher who taught in the school. A brief time was spent chatting before the recorder was set. This process was used with all students who were interviewed. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) discussed that unique circumstances exist when interviewing children, particularly if the interviewer is a stranger or outsider. They described this interaction as not adult to child, yet a “quasi-friend” relationship that enables the researcher to be accepted. (p. 85).

Questions were asked using a semi-structured interview process. Initially questions included ones that were non-controversial and involved topics about school-related activities and experiences (Patton, 2002). Once these types of questions were asked then more knowledge-based questions were asked such as, what are some rules or
expectations for you in hallways at your school? Responses included, “Um, don’t run in them [hallways] and use proper language”, “Ah, be quiet in the hallways so teachers don’t get bothered”, “No hitting so that one will get hurt”, “Don’t push people around”, “No cussing”, “Walk in line and don’t talk loud”, “Stay on the right side, don’t push, shove, no running, No name-calling. No cussing.”

At the beginning of arrival time a few students were found sporadically seated at tables in the cafeteria. After approaching the first student who was a Caucasian female seventh grader who sat with her arms folded over a jacket at a table, permission was requested to ask questions and record responses. After talking to the seventh grade female and other sitting in close proximity next to her, the interviewer approached a group of three boys sitting several tables away. After a brief introduction, they all seemed interested in participating in a conversation. As the interviewer sat and spoke with these seventh grade male students, more and more students entered into the cafeteria. The process at the point took on more of a focus group interview, with each student answering questions one-at-a-time. Clusters of seventh grade Caucasian males huddled around the area where the interviewer sat. Anyone invited to talk was willing to volunteer. The interviewer remained in this area until a bell rang at 7:45 and students left for their first period class. According to Marshall and Rossman (1999) people need to hear others opinions to develop their own understand of a phenomena or lived experiences. This seemed to be the case with responses during this time. For example, when asked what is behaviorally expected of you in the hallways, one student said, “Same thing he said, not to push.” Another student contributed his views in more depth by sharing, “Um, most of
the time they can get pretty hectic cause people are shov’n, scream’n, um tripping people, but I mean I just kinda wish that everybody would kinda get into an orderly fashion so we could just get in and out of our classrooms. It would be much easier.”

Such comments seemed to encourage additional responses; in one case it gave a student the opportunity to express his dissatisfaction with current conditions. “You are suppose to walk quietly and although it never is cause there are so many people. The stairs are too crowed. People fall down all the time. They drop their stuff.”

Observation Another aspect of this pilot study included observing student and teacher interaction in a specific setting in the school. It was the interest of the researcher to observe the students in their natural setting, yet the cafeteria was the setting at that time that the SWPBS team determined as problematic and requested feedback from university consultants. Therefore, the following observation was conducted in the cafeteria rather than the hallway, but the same principles were applied regarding the apparent involvement of teacher in the SWPBS process and the subsequent improvement in student behavior. The observation took place during a seventh grade 30-minute lunch period in which little over 300 students were in attendance.

The cafeteria is about 60 feet long and 37 feet wide. Ten rows of connecting brown-topped rectangle shaped tables were set up in the cafeteria. Eight of the ten tables were 36 feet long in length. Two other tables in the middle of the cafeteria are slightly shorter and measured 30 feet in length. All the tables consisted of smaller, connecting tables. The longer tables, which measured 36 feet in length, had 3 connecting table which each measured 12 feet. The two shorter tables in the middle of the cafeteria
consisted of one six foot and two 12-foot connecting tables. Blue plastic chairs with shiny metal legs lined both sides of all of the tables. The tables in the middle of the cafeteria, which will be referred to as table five and six [the observer indiscriminately numbered the tables for easier reference], extend out from the kitchen area near two doors in which students exit out from after going through the lines to get their food. On either side of the exit areas are open spaces in which students enter into the food line. Students simultaneously lined up on either side of these entry areas and lines extend the length of the cafeteria. Students entered the right side of the cafeteria and go to either one of these lines. One line was formed directly ahead of the entrance way into the cafeteria and enter into the food service area.

Directly across from the food service/kitchen area, on the opposite side of the cafeteria was a snack window. The snack window was about eight feet in length and is position between restrooms. The girls’ restroom was on the left and the boys on the right of the snack window. Continuing along this wall, to the adjacent wall, is a display of a former student's picture and jersey that played basketball and became distinguished player in the national leagues. Along this wall was where another line of students line up to purchase their lunches.

Promptly, at 11:25 students walked briskly into the cafeteria. They walked in clusters of 3 to 5 students and quickly got to the front of the line to be first to get their food. According to reports from teachers, they also cluster together and rush so they can be assured to sit with each other. Within in minutes, the lines on both sides of the
Hustle and bustle seemed to grow as students filed in to the other side of the cafeteria. Adults who are already present in the cafeteria were Officer S, a police officer who was hired by the district and was at the middle school full-time to assure a safe and drug free learning environment. Every day, Officer S. was in the cafeteria to help monitor students. Officer S. was a well-built, African American man who stands about six feet tall. He has a great rapport with the students and regularly conversed with students. The students enjoy his company. He liked to joke and laugh with the students, yet has been quite serious and direct with students when necessary. In addition to Officer S., there is a full-time lunchroom monitor. This Caucasian woman was short in stature and has been observed watching students and assisting with tasks, such as picking up garbage or pushing in chairs. Interaction with students was primarily when students approached her with questions.

Additional adults in the cafeteria included three undergraduate, two females and one male and one female graduate Ohio University students conducting observations. They were collecting baseline data, observing for discrete behaviors, which included line ditching [cutting in line], throwing food and clean up area [food or trash left on floor] specific to seventh grade. Baseline data were to be collected for 5 consecutive days and this was the third day.

A teacher, who will be referred to as teacher A, walked into the cafeteria and briskly moves to the front of the line, apparently in a rush to meet students and get them
into a single line. She walked straight up the front of line (the line the assembles by entrance) She was a Caucasian women, who had long, curly, brownish red hair and stands over five feet tall. She wearing denim dress and had her hands in her pockets. After walking up to the front of the line, she briefly talked with students and smiles. She looked back down the line to see two or three area with large clusters of students standing and talking. This teacher abruptly walked through this area, waving her hand in a motion to get students to move into a single file. She yelled, “O.K. guys get in a single file!” She walked the length of the line, as she passed by students to move over into a single line.

Another teacher walked into the cafeteria that will be referred to as teacher B. She walked in with her classroom aid that also has cafeteria monitoring duty. The classroom aid, [which will refer to as CA] walked on toward the snack window area. Teacher B walked over to table nine and ten area [the tables on the opposite end]. After the researcher had a brief conversation with this teacher it was determined that the students who tend to sit at table ten are loud and sometime aggressive. This teacher is a Caucasian and has short, curly, brown hair. She teaches students in a class who have behavior disorders. She stood about six feet tall and could be seem interacting regularly with students in the cafeteria. The aide positioned herself standing quietly with arms crossed and leaned on a chair to the left of table three. She was seen looking towards the left of the cafeteria.

Teacher B moved and was seen standing between tables four and five, with arms crossed. She was looking out across the tables towards the direction of the snack table wall. She was seen scanning the tables, watching students. At that time, Officer S. talked
on the microphone to students to move down the tables. The procedure expected of
students as they exit out of the food service door was to fill outer tables first and move
down to the end of the tables. So, those students leaving the exit doors of the food
service area on the left would start to fill table ten and the same procedure was used on
the opposite side of the cafeteria. This was done so all chairs were filled. After this
announcement, teacher B walked over to table 10, which has been filled. While watching
teacher B, the principal entered the cafeteria. The principal and observer talked briefly
about the noise level as it seemed louder in comparison to last Friday. The principal
explained that it was because they were on plan A last week. This was when there was
inclement weather and the buses only travel certain routes. Therefore, only about 1/3 of
the students attended school on those days.

Attention was then drawn to the custodian. He not only kept the cafeteria clean
and organized, he helped monitor students. He is a tall, lean Caucasian male who is
dressed in jeans and a short-sleeve tee shirt. He often held a broom as he talked to
students or other adults in area. He walked over to a group of eight male students who
are standing outside the entranceway of the cafeteria against the brick wall. He hollered
for the group to move down and closes the gap in the line. As these students moved
down, the principal walked over and motioned for four of these students to move to the
other side of the cafeteria to the other line.

As the students moved, the cafeteria aide was in the same position and teacher B
joined her. They are talking to each other while looking over to the left of the cafeteria.
Their backs are to tables one, two and three. A student was sitting by himself towards the
end of table five. He has almost shoulder length hair that seems greasy and possibly dirty. The principal sat down across the table to talk with the student. The principal talked for a couple of minutes with the student and got up. Teacher A was then seen talking with the CA over in food service exit area in front of table seven and eight. Officer S. called over the microphone system for a student to report to him. He said, “[student’s name] where are you? He repeated this question and a student eventually walked up to him. They spoke briefly to each other and the student walked back to his seat.

Then teacher B moved between tables nine and ten and the principal moved between tables seven and eight. Both appeared to be scanning students as they walked among the tables. Teacher B walked over to girls who are waving their arms in the air. Officer S. moved to the same area. The line into the service area had moved all the way through, leaving a clear view of table one.

The CA was observed going into the restroom and walking out. She stood in front of the restroom at the end of table one and two. Two boys were observed playing paper, scissors and rock game, bumping the top of their fist on each other’s hands. The CA walked around table one toward the food service end of the cafeteria and around table three and back to where she stood previously in front of the girls’ restroom. She then motioned and told table one to get up and dispose of their trays.

In other areas of the cafeteria, the principal could be seen leaning over talking with students at the end of table five in front of the snack window. Teacher B walked between tables nine and ten, dismissing students to dispose of trays. At this time, teacher
A was seen standing in front of table one and two eating what appears to be nachos and cheese. The cafeteria aid was then seen escorting about six students out of the cafeteria. These students, walking in a single line, are carrying notebooks with them. It could be assumed they were returning to the Alternative Learning Center, which is in-school suspension.

At table one, students had returned and sat down. Two students were seen kicking at one another. The CA watched and monetarily moved to over to these students. She said, “Boys.” and motioned that they will have to go to the hallway. Reportedly, lunch monitors may have students sit in hallway, opposite of entrance area, past the snack window as a punishment for misbehavior. They are then dismissed last; after all other students left the cafeteria. The CA walked back to end of table one, in front of girls’ restroom and started to dismiss the table. She had all the students, on both sides of the table stand up and walk out. Teacher B could be seen doing the same yet dismissed one side of a table at time. As one side exited out, she walked by and pushed in empty chairs.

Results

*Hallway Transition – Direct Observation* Though visual analysis of data, a clear decrease in all targeted behaviors were seen. Eighth grade showed a 34% improvement, seventh grade showed a 36% improvement and sixth grade had improved by 45%, with an overall improvement rate of 38% for all grades. Both running and pushing significantly decreased after the implementation of the intervention phase in most hallway areas for grades. For example, sixth grade students had over 50 incidents of running during the four-day baseline phase. This targeted behavior decreased to less than
12 incidents after the intervention phase was implemented. Improvement was also seen in seventh grade students who were entering into the cafeteria had over 20 incidents of pushing during the baseline. Pushing during this time then decreased to less than 10 incidents for seventh graders during the intervention phase.

Since co-observers were stationed at four different hallway areas to observe the transition of students to the cafeteria, interrater reliability was evaluated. Ratings indicated a positive correlation for each pair of observers for each of the six behaviors. This was done for the pre and post intervention phases. Correlations ranged from .445 to .833 for the pre-intervention phase, with a mean across the six behaviors of .664. Additionally, correlations ranged from .377 to .875 for the post-intervention phase, with a mean across the six behaviors of .632. Cumulatively, all twelve behaviors in pre and post-interventions showed correlations that were statistically significant \((p < 0.05)\) (Oswald, Safran & Johanson, 2005).

Several confounding variables were taken into consideration when examining these data. First, the effects of being observed may have caused a Hawthorn Effect and may have heightened a display of behavior which otherwise may not have occurred. Also, teachers were inconsistent in the use of interventions. Teachers were asked by the SWPBS team to “be visible” and enter into hallways after students were dismissed from class. Some teachers were seen doing this, while others were not. It also cannot be determined who actually used pre-correction or reminders with their students before they were dismissed from class. During a final staff-wide SWPBS meeting, the data collected was shared with the staff by the SWPBS team.
Also, observation procedures needed to be better designed. The observers were not trained in knowing which behaviors constituted a tally mark. Therefore, behaviors needed to be better defined and observers trained in observing for the defined behaviors. The observation tool used by observers also posed problems. The design used made it problematic for observers to consistently mark an area on the observation tool that was designated for a targeted behavior. This posed difficulties in later analysis of data. It would be recommended that a practice run be instituted, with defined behaviors and a reliable observation tool. During practice data collection proceedings, one could then make necessary changes as seen fit.

**Interviews** These quantitative results indicate a moderate improvement in student behavior, which could be attributed to the SWPBS team and teacher involvement in the development and implementation of interventions used in the hallways. Since one cannot gather qualitative narrative from quantitative inquiry (Patton, 2002) it is essential in this phenomenological pilot study of teacher, administrator and student involvement to include the analysis of results to verify that these improvements are attributed to the improvement plan devised by the SWPBS team and teachers in the school. As explained by Patton (2002), “One can go from thick description of qualitative data to quantitative analysis, but not vice versa.” (p. 119).

When students were asked what was behaviorally expected of them in their schools they were all able to give appropriate responses. For example, one student responded with ideas such as be nice, use appropriate language, and respect the higher authority. Thought such as these could reflect the student having processed school-wide
rules that have been established in the school, which include, be respectful and cooperative, be safe and orderly, be honest and responsible and be kind and considerate. Also when asked what was behaviorally expected of the students in the hallways students gave appropriate responses. For example, when asked about the hallway expectations, students responded with “Don’t push people around”, “No cussing”, “Walk in line and don’t talk loud.” In closing I asked the students why these rules were needed in their school. Responses to this question were appropriate as well. For example students describe how these rules allow them to be safe and orderly in their school. These responses are also consistent with the school-wide rules.

Ironically, the students referred to respect as being shown only to adults or higher authority. The students need to see that respect can be given not only to adults, but also to their peers as well as themselves. This was not the case with one student who when asked what was behaviorally expected at the school of students said, “Be respectful to others.”

About half of the students replied to questions about rules and/or expectations in negative terms. For example, they said no pushing, no ditching, or no cussing. This could indicate that they were taught what not to do rather than being taught what to do. All the rules and expectations were phrased in positive terms, yet students may have been use to discipline being traditionally reactive and consequently negatively reinforce. Overall, the comment and statements made by the students would lead one to believe that the students have knowledge of school-wide rules and behavioral expectations that have been established in their school.
Observation  In addition to interviews used to glean evidence of teacher roles in SWPBS, observation also substantiated this as student and teachers interacted with one another during lunchtime. Even though this observation was not conducted during hallway transitions, teacher interactions with students could be readily observed in the cafeteria that would complement the school-wide behavioral expectations developed by the SWPBS team. The observation during this lunchtime could be described as an “observation in situ”, a phrase credited to Everette Hughes (Weinburg, 2002). Hughes explained that a researcher using this method of observation is not looking to change behavior or situations. Instead, a researcher using the “observation in situ” intends to observe behavior phenomena that he or she has a personal interest in without interrupting the social organization.

In this situation the observer had no intention of interrupting the social routines that regularly occur in this environment, yet the very presence of the observer did just that. For example, when the observer’s friend and former colleague entered into the cafeteria a conversation evolved between the two. The exchange of words briefly took her away from her duty as a lunch monitor, which changed the dynamics of students properly being supervised during that time. This type of interaction also changed the role of the observer as an onlooker to that of a participant observer. Patton (2002) described a continuum that exists between full participation and silent spectator. The observer found herself moving back and forth along this continuum, but primarily remaining on the spectator end. The observer did not volunteer conversation with adults or students, but did not decline opportunities for social interaction.
Aside from welcoming social interactions, the observer had to keep focus as to purpose of the observation. Since the pilot study was to examine the role of teachers and administrators in Positive Behavior Supports, the observer wanted to focus primarily on their behavior and those of the students. Some things observer watched for were teachers’ interactions with students. It is recommended in the literature that while teachers are supervising they should be talking with students. This might involve discussion with students about activities of interests and providing feedback to student in the form of verbal praise (Colvin, Sugai, Good & Lee, 1997; Lewis, Colvin & Sugai, 2000). On one occasion, adults that were supervising were positioning themselves in one area that blocked their vision of students behind them. Active supervision should involve varying your body positions and avoid standing in one area (Colvin et al., 1997). It would also seem effective to supervise with apparent interest and enthusiasm by keeping arms to one’s side and appear happy by smiling. This may help communicate a welcoming friendly demeanor to students. On some occasions the observer was able to talk with the teacher’s supervising explaining why they handled a situation they way they did. Without this conversation for example, the observer may not have understood why teacher B chose to scan tables where more aggressive students gathered. Therefore, the observer found herself multi-tasking by conducting brief interviews and observing at the same time. Patton (2002) explains that in participant observation no separation exist between interviewing and observing. On a small scale the observer was conducting participant observation and found it very valuable.
APPENDIX B

Table 1: Middle School (Pilot Study): Schoolwide Behavioral Expectations for Specific Settings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settings</th>
<th>School-Wide Rules</th>
<th>Be Respectful and Cooperative</th>
<th>Be Safe and Orderly</th>
<th>Be Honest and Responsible</th>
<th>Be Kind and Considerate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1 Hallways</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. Talk quietly</td>
<td>1. Walk</td>
<td>1. Arrive on time</td>
<td>1. Help others in need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Use appropriate language</td>
<td>2. Walk on the right</td>
<td>2. Use passes when</td>
<td>2. Be polite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>belongings to self</td>
<td>Don’t block</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2 Cafeteria</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. No cutting or ditching</td>
<td>1. Single file lines</td>
<td>1. Pay for your own food</td>
<td>1. Speak quietly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Be polite to all staff</td>
<td>2. Keep food and</td>
<td>2. Clean up after yourself</td>
<td>2. Stack trays carefully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Refrain from touching</td>
<td>objects to self</td>
<td>3. Use drinking fountain</td>
<td>3. Use appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>bulletin boards, display cases and gate</td>
<td>3. Once seated, stay seated</td>
<td>responsibly</td>
<td>language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3 Arrival and</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. Follow directions</td>
<td>1. Walk</td>
<td>1. Have needed materials</td>
<td>1. Use appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dismissal</td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Stay in own space</td>
<td>2. Stay on sidewalk</td>
<td>2. Enter and exit in</td>
<td>language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Demonstrate patience</td>
<td>3. Exit doors</td>
<td>timely manner</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>single file</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4 Restrooms</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. Use equipment correctly</td>
<td>1. Keep facility</td>
<td>1. Practice good hygiene</td>
<td>1. Keep your hands and</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>clean</td>
<td></td>
<td>feet to self</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Keep your straps to</td>
<td>combinat</td>
<td>body parts, books, etc.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>yourself</td>
<td>ion to yourself</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Love your locker</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Student - Hello, I am ___________________________ and we are here to share information about bullying and a plan we have for ------- elementary. You probably saw the articles in school newspaper about bullying. Here at school you might remember completing a survey about bullying.

Researcher (Researcher reads a couple quotes)

Student “Here are some quotes from the students and teachers about bullying.”

Student “Would anyone like to share a time they have seen someone being bullied?”

Student “When someone is bullied they feel very alone, like no one cares.”

Principal (Principal introduces paper bag activity)

Student “The next thing is that you will be seeing are posters hung in the school that show the rules that include no bullying.”

Student (Hold up one poster)

Student “So when you see someone bullying, you are a bystander. You can be an active bystander and report what you see.”

Student reads:

a. When you see someone being bullied come to the office or go to your teacher.
b. Privately fill out one of these report slips (hold up example)
c. Your name will be added to the VIP book.
d. All reports will be kept in secret with Mrs. -------
e. Mrs. ------- will check on the reports turned in. There will be a box in the office to place your reports.

Student “Remember, incentives for your name added to the VIP book will be given.”

Student “Are there any ideas for new things to be added to incentive box? (Write ideas down)
APPENDIX D

------Confidential------ Bullying Reporting Slip Date___________________
Name of person(s) reporting:______________________________________________

Name of person(s) being bullied:

Names of bully(s):

What do you see the bully or bullies do or say?

What did you see the other people around the incident do or say?
APPENDIX E

The following research study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Ohio University for the period listed below. This review was conducted through an expedited review procedure as defined in the federal regulations as Category(ies):

Project Title: Positive Behavior Supports: The Involvement of Students in the Process

Researchers: Karen Oswald

Faculty Advisor (if applicable): Dianne Gut

Department: Teacher Education

Jeff Vancouver, Ph.D., Chair
Institutional Review Board
Approval Date 12/7/07
Expiration Date 12/6/08

This approval is valid until expiration date listed above. If you wish to continue beyond expiration date, you must submit a periodic review application and obtain approval prior to continuation.

Adverse events must be reported to the IRB promptly, within 5 working days of the occurrence.

The approval remains in effect provided the study is conducted exactly as described in your application for review. Any additions or modifications to the project must be approved by the IRB (as an amendment) prior to implementation.
The amendment, detailed below, and submitted for the following research study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Ohio University. Approval date of this amendment does not affect the expiration date of the original approval.

Amendment: Utilize School-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET)

Project: Positive Behavior Supports: The Involvement of Students in the Process

Project Director: Karen Oswald

Advisor: Dianne Gut

Department: Teacher Education

Jeff Vancouver, Ph.D., Chair
Institutional Review Board

Date: 12/18/07