

A Dissertation

Entitled

Perspectives and Practices of Ohio School Leaders

Using School-wide Positive Behavior Supports

By

Kristine Siesel Fauver

Submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
The Education Doctorate Degree  
In Educational Administration and Supervision

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Abstract

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This research was a qualitative study of how school leaders perceive and practice School-wide Positive Behavior Supports (SWPBS). This study was designed based on an assumption that educators' attitudes and actions toward discipline are interrelated.

Three Ohio elementary schools using SWPBS provided the opportunistic sample for this study. At each school site, the principal and a teacher were interviewed about SWPBS perceptions and practices, observations were recorded, and documents and artifacts were collected.

The data were analyzed in three ways: a descriptive analysis of each site, a comparative analysis within each site and among sites, and an interpretive analysis. Major themes emerged linking the SWPBS perceptions and practices: acquiring and adapting perceptions, and then instilling and inspiring practices. In essence, the perceptions that are favorable toward SWPBS appeared to be acquired through formative

experiences and through formal SWPBS trainings. These perceptions were adapted through collaborative discussions among staff. Through congruent practices, PBS was instilled on a school-wide basis. Finally, the effectiveness of these practices inspired future SWPBS practice. The study findings were connected to theoretical constructs in sociology and psychology. School-wide positive behavior support practices and perceptions were associated with transformational leadership and democratic and social values. The climates in the three elementary schools in this study were characterized by openness, warmth, positive regard, and high academic aspirations

The general perceptions of SWPBS leaders in this study included: desiring to make a difference among students, envisioning more effective behavioral practices, and valuing the community. The prevalent SWPBS practices among leaders in this study were: collaborating with one another, posting of core rules prominently throughout the buildings, using a matrix to depict behavioral expectation throughout the school, giving reward tickets to students who exemplify expected behavior, communicating with staff regarding behavior expectations, charting behavior, and using office referral forms to record and respond to inappropriate student behavior

Applications for school practice, policy development, and training are offered. Considerations for further research in school discipline practices are provided.

## Dedication

*Dedicated to our Youth  
The Hope of our Country.*

Quote engraved on the exterior of  
The Central Administration Building  
Bowling Green City Schools  
Bowling Green, OH

## Acknowledgements

While this dissertation lists a single author, there are an extraordinary number of people who have contributed to the product and the process. I am very grateful to each and every one.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

School discipline is the application of school management practices based on student behavior needs and societal perspectives. Attention to student behavior is required in order to promote a safe and orderly learning environment (Traynor, 2002). Effective behavior management in educational settings can be viewed as addressing three broad needs: (a) to maintain safety, (b) to promote academic learning, and (c) to foster social skills.

School safety is more than the absence of violence – it is an educational right. A safe school limits the incidents of threat *and* curtails the incidence of violence and is one that allows for maximum growth and development of students. (Morrison, Furlong, D’Incau, & Morrison, 2004, p. 259)

Concerns about student behavior are not new; the search for effective discipline practices has been pursued by American educators for centuries. Recent history suggests similar concerns; lack of discipline has ranked among the top three problems facing public schools for the past 38 years (Rose & Gallop, 2006). As school discipline continues to be one of education’s major problems, finding effective practices among practitioners is an ongoing quest.

This study documents newer discipline practices and school leaders' perceptions toward discipline.

### *Youth Violence*

Multiple-victim school shootings in this country have heightened public awareness of the need for violence prevention within educational settings (Cantor, Crosse, Hagen, Mason, Siler, & vonGlatz, 2002). Consequently, there is increased pressure to devise and implement tactics to enhance student safety. "Safety" refers to freedom from harm, while "security" refers to freedom from apprehension of being harmed (Morrison et al. 2004, p. 259). Safe and secure schools result in optimal educational growth of all students.

Garbarino and deLara (2002) indicate that a majority of teens do not feel secure at school. "Experts tell us that it is bullying, not a terrorist attack, that teens see as the biggest threat that frightens them and interferes with their education" (National School Safety Center, 2004, p. 6). These implied threats from bullies impact more students than the targeted victim. It is imperative that educators learn from the school homicides and from the more pervasive instances of bullying. Establishing and maintaining school environments that are physically safe and psychologically secure is essential.

State and federal legislation has been enacted to maintain safe schools. Federal legislation includes the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1994, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994, and the No Smoking in Schools Law (the Ohio Department of Education, 2006).

When this study was conducted State legislation in Ohio required zero tolerance and school safety planning. The Zero Tolerance law passed in the 1990s, O.R.C. Section

3313-534, defines and prohibits school violence as well as disruptive and inappropriate behaviors (the Ohio Department of Education, 2006). School Safety Planning, O.R.C. 3313.535, requires protocols for addressing and responding to serious safety threats (the Ohio Department of Education, 2006).

### *School Response*

Historically, student behavior has frustrated American educators since colonial times. In the early 1900s, concern shifted from intervening on behalf of troubled youth to viewing the child as evidencing defective character. Psychiatric childhood mental health classifications bolstered the view that the deficit resided within the child. In more recent decades, educational classifications have resulted in specialized school programs for the emotionally disturbed (Danforth & Smith, 2005).

By the early 2000s, a United States Department of Education study, pre-September 11<sup>th</sup>, found that most schools reported low levels of violence and that visitors felt safe (Cantor et al., 2002). School rules, policies, and practices were similar among districts. Generally, teachers have managed classroom discipline issues until undesirable behavior needed administrative intervention. Consequences for rule infractions were generally a form of punishment, beginning with warnings, revoking privileges, informing parents, detention, suspension, alternative schooling, transfer, expulsion, and corporal punishment in some schools. Cartledge and Lo (2006) refer to “exclusionary practices,” including time-out, detention, suspension, and expulsion, as procedures typically implemented in the management of student misbehavior (p. 172). There are a number of difficulties with using exclusionary practices to manage discipline. Suspension offers a

reactive consequence to student misbehavior. Often ineffective because the process removes the student from schooling, suspension may result in unsupervised days at home.

The seemingly inexplicable use of suspension and expulsion to address youth discipline is a cause for concern. Each suspension is a record of student misbehavior serious enough to warrant administrative intervention. Repeated use of exclusionary practices results in lost educational opportunity. To the student and family, as well as the school system, each suspension represents a permanent record of a problem. “Present methods of controlling school violence and crime, such as suspension, leave a lot to be desired” (Friedman, 2005, p. 67). Educators may hope to replace exclusionary practices with behavioral programs. Although there are over 300 programs available to address student behavioral concerns, most programs lack scientific evidence to support efficacy (Friedman, 2005, p. 65). More recent research focuses on alternatives to exclusionary practices (Breunlin, Cimmarusti, Bryant-Edwards, & Hetherington, 2002). Importantly, it is not simply availability of staff, but what effective services are provided that reduces exclusionary practices (Bruns, Moor, Stephan, Pruitt, & Weist, 2005).

Schooling can reduce or increase the risk of aggression (Cernkovich & Giordano, 1992). Epp and Watkinson (1997) refer to “systemic violence” as a system variable that increases the probability of individual or group harm (p. xi). Counteracting these risk factors are protective factors, such as child characteristics, family and parenting, and schooling (Morrison et al., 2004).

Education leaders are expected to evidence high academic achievement for all students while maintaining a safe environment conducive to learning. Consistent with the mission of education, safe school efforts are likely to contribute to successful education

for all students (Morrison et al., 2004). Schools that compromise safety may actually cause developmental harm that damages the learning potential of their students.

The primary problem-solving paradigm of the last century featured a deficit model based on pathology. In educational system reform, problems were defined by lack of success, and difficulties with implementing change were viewed as resistance to intervention. A new paradigm for educational leaders, based on principles of positive psychology, offers a more hopeful outcome of change by understanding human elements of change and by applying evidence-based research. Shapiro (2000) calls for “a significant shift in our energies...that will lead to academically healthy and successful generations of children yet to come” (p. 569).

Just as medical science has progressed from pathology and the treatment of disease to prevention and wellness, so too, education can benefit from an emphasis on human potential and optimal functioning. The goal of positive psychology is to prevent or reduce the incidence of psychopathology (Seligman, 2007). In education, a comparable goal would be to prevent or reduce academic failure or to foster optimal academic skill acquisition for all students. This goal is notably similar to federal mandates in the No Child Left Behind Act. According to Akin-Little, Little, and Delligatti (2004), “Optimal development occurs when the needs of students are met and when they are appropriately challenged” (p. 158).

### *Evidence of Preventative Practice*

Both student and system variables are tightly interconnected in discipline concerns. Shapiro (2006) indicated context, conceptual model, capacity building, and collaboration as essential to focusing on large-scale efforts. The key to system capacity is



the need for “ongoing data collection and evaluation” (Shapiro, 2006, p. 262). Shapiro recommends that educators need to shift toward systemic thinking to solve the large problems facing education.

Ervin, Schaughency, Goodman, McGlinchey, and Matthews (2006) conclude that “schools are unique, evolving systems that differ in their need and/or readiness for innovations” (p. 214). A public health prevention model is recommended in addressing student behavior. Ohio’s Integrated System’s Model (OISM) was an educational application of a prevention model having been replaced by the Tri-Tier Model. The three-tier levels are designed to support academic and behavior needs (Csanyi, 2006). Three levels, or tiers, of treatment are delineated in research: primary, secondary, and tertiary. Primary prevention is proactive treatment that prevents the occurrence of a problem. Secondary prevention is used in the early identification of a difficulty or problem. At this secondary level, small group strategies are used to treat difficulties. While most problems are resolved at the primary and secondary levels, tertiary prevention is needed for serious, persistent problems. At the tertiary level, intensive, individualized treatment is indicated. (Akin-Little et al., 2004).

Program structures must be acceptable, sustainable, and exportable (Ervin et al., 2006, p. 219). Further study of the features adding or detracting from system reform is needed. Findings from the U.S. Department of Education indicate the need to “improve the quality of prevention programs through attention to needs assessment, planning, increased use of research-based approaches, and monitoring of implementation” (Crosse et al., 2002, p. i).

Terjesen, Jacofsky, Froh, and DiGiuseppe (2004) believe that “fostering a system-wide program toward reinforcing positive aspects of child development may help in the long-term reduction in referrals for academic and behavioral difficulties” (p. 166). It is recommended that schools “adopt a ‘continuous improvement’ process, whereby quality of implementation, results of activities, and incidents of problem behavior are tracked to serve as a basis for modifying activities and developing future plans” (Crosse et al., 2002, p. ix). Reinforcing positive aspects of child development is consistent with positive psychology.

Primary prevention represents a paradigm shift: preemptively managing problems to prevent occurrence. School systems have typically addressed problems reactively, that is, after an incident or problem occurs. Educational practices that prevent the occurrence of problem behavior are the focus of this study.

Children will achieve better outcomes from prevention rather than remediation of problems. Learning and prosocial behavior are promoted in safe school environments (Oswald et al., 2005). Friedman (2005) suggests that “excellent academic instruction made relevant to students’ lives, and student involvement in their education may address problems before they rise to the level of violence” (p.66).

Grimes, Kurns, and Tilly (2006) reviewed the 15 years of Iowa’s Heartland Problem Solving Model. The lessons learned are critical to students’ behavioral as well as academic needs, a process that “represents a shift in the agency’s culture and how its members interact” (p. 241). One of the critical components is the ongoing collection of data to guide continuous improvement.

Positive behavior supports (PBS) is a concept referring to prevention of student behavioral concerns. Positive behavior support is characterized by use of data, application of incentives, teaching social skills, and teaching replacement behavior.

School-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) consists of empirically validated instructional practices that teach and reinforce pro-social behavior on a building-wide basis. Student learning outcomes have been enhanced through PBS, including the facilitation of student achievement, prevention of problem behavior, and improvement in school climate (Lewis & Sugai, 1999 as cited in Cartledge & Lo, 2006). The emphasis of PBS is on “helping students grow and become socially competent” rather than on controlling student behavior (Cartledge & Lo, 2006, p.12). A safe learning environment results from this proactive approach to student behavior. School-wide positive behavior support, then, appears to meet three broad school discipline needs: (a) to maintain safety, (b) to promote academic learning, and (c) to foster social skills.

School discipline requires the application of school management practices based on student behavior needs and societal perspectives. A systems perspective is useful in viewing the interrelated features of student behavior, societal influences, and administrative interaction.

A question left for future research advanced by Sugai and Horner (2006) is “What role do school- and district-level administrators play in the adoption and sustained use of SWPBS?” (p. 256). Aspects of the administrator’s role in SWPBS are addressed in the present study.

### *Problem*

There seems to be unanimous agreement that schools need to be safe environments conducive to the goal of learning. How to create safe environments has challenged educators, community, and policy makers for centuries. Efforts toward legislating school safety place a premium on order and economy but sacrifice the values of freedom, equality, and individualism. Prevalent school practices have not been equitable, especially among students with disabilities, low income, and racially diverse students (Krezmein, Leone, & Achilles, 2004; Nichols, 2004; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002). School personnel are often highly frustrated in efforts both to manage problematic behavior as well as to maintain the normality of functioning consistent with high academic outcomes.

The challenge of ensuring safe schools requires that education professionals, trained in a variety of disciplines, be able to work together in an ongoing, continual process of school change. This challenge will require that these professionals clearly communicate their vision and understand the perspectives that others bring to the work process (Morrison et al., 2004, p. 289).

Examples of challenges include the following:

- Exclusionary practices are ineffective means of managing student misbehavior.
- Despite readily available discipline data - specifically office discipline referrals (ODR) which can assess school safety, monitor behavior climate, and evaluate building level interventions - few schools use any specific process to examine behavior incident data. (LeTendre, 2000, as cited in Irvin et al., 2006).

- Few schools differentiate interventions to address student needs. The United States Department of Education study indicated “Schools are following best practices and policies on school rules and on tracking student behavior but need improvement on the range of responses to student conduct and on predictable and consistent discipline” (Crosse et al., 2002, p. 33). Children transitioning into schools need preventative interventions (Petrus et. al., 2004). Ultimately, universal instruction provides an evaluative purpose in determining the need for strategic group or intensive individualized interventions. Strategies and supports are inadequate for students with significant difficulties.

Yet, effective practices are available. Schools employing SWPBS have reported “20% to 60% reductions in office discipline referrals” (Horner, Todd, Lewis-Palmer, Irvin, Sugai, & Boland, 2004, p. 3).

Primary prevention represents a paradigm shift: preemptively managing problems to prevent occurrence. School systems have typically addressed problems reactively - that is, after an incident or problem occurs. Educational practices that prevent the occurrence of problem behavior are the focus of this study.

### *Research Question*

The purpose of this study was to answer the following research question: In Ohio school systems, what are the perceptions and practices of SWPBS leaders towards discipline? This question was designed to understand leaders’ actions and attitudes toward discipline. A search of literature indicated no study examining the school leader’s role and practices associated with SWPBS in Ohio school systems.

### *Purpose*

“It is one of life’s great ironies: schools are in the business of teaching and learning, yet they are terrible at learning from each other. If they ever discover how to do this, their future is assured” (Fullen, 2001, pp. 92-93). School leaders are implementing more proactive, preventative methods of addressing student behavior. School-wide positive behavior support is one such program. Understanding the perceptions of practices of school leaders evidencing SWPBS is essential. The successes of these pioneers of applied behavior practices have implications for school leaders who are relying on reactive approaches. These understandings have the potential for accelerating the system change process for school leaders looking to implement proactive discipline programs.

The purpose of this study was to examine SWPBS leader practices and perceptions regarding improvement of student behavior and to project how SWPBS practices are likely to become more prevalent in Ohio schools. The aim of this research was to describe “what is” regarding SWPBS practice and perceptions and to discover “what may be” regarding implications and future trends (Schofield, 1990, p. 226).

### *Significance*

This research is of significant merit to Ohio and other states implementing SWPBS or other system-wide behavioral changes. Current policies link academic success to effective reduction in nonacademic barriers to learning, including behavior. The significance of this study lay in its investigation of perceptions and experiences of SWPBS team leaders regarding student discipline in an era of high academic

accountability. This study documented SWPBS in several of Ohio's school districts that have reported high academic achievement.

This study explored the role of school leaders in implementing effective discipline practices and in the shift toward proactive discipline. It is imperative that the field of education gain insight from the leaders who are affecting desired educational outcomes, as measured by state indicators, and how these leaders are viewing student behavior and discipline.

Results of this study are intended to contribute to the depth and breadth of knowledge on best practices in public school systems. Educational administrators, as well as others concerned with positive behavior supports in school settings, will benefit from these research findings. Ohio universities involved in teacher or leadership preparation programs could apply research findings to evolving best practices in applying SWPBS.

#### *Delimitations, Limitations and Assumptions*

This study of Ohio school leaders implementing SWPBS was restricted in scope by the following delimitations:

1. This study sampled 3 Ohio schools using SWPBS during the 2007-08 academic year.
2. The study was restricted to leaders' perceptions and practices related to student behavior and discipline.
3. The primary data sources for this study were interview, observation, and document analysis.
4. The methodology of this research was qualitative due to the question under study.

5. The researcher recognizes bias due to years of experience in public education.

Research has been designed to minimize bias and promote objectivity in collection, analysis and interpretation of data.

Limitations of this study, factors outside researcher control, included:

1. School personnel experience with SWPBS varied.

2. Depth and breadth of leaders' recollections pertaining to student discipline varied.

3. Candor of participants' self-reporting.

Specific principles valued by the researcher in undertaking this research were as follows:

1. Appropriate and timely preventative practices, behavioral and academic, result in successful educational outcomes for children.

2. Behavior support continuums with evidenced-based practices are essential to student safety achievement and to maximizing system operation.

3. Effective leadership and support services are vital to student and system gains.

4. Children have a right to learn in a supportive educational climate. Behaviors that are essential to this supportive climate need to be taught, monitored, and reinforced.

5. Behavior supports are most likely to be preventative when using system-wide positive, strengths-based approaches.

### Definition of Terms

The terminology used in this study is defined as follows:

Academic behavior deficit pathway: pathway of entering school with learning problems but no observable behavior problems (McIntosh et al., 2006).



Alterable variables: predictors of school success that educators have the ability to change, such as suspension rate (Christenson & Thurlow, 2004).

Attendance rate: a student's aggregate days of attendance divided by 100 (Christie, Nelson & Jolivet, 2004).

Developmental assets: positive experiences and qualities essential for the promotion of positive outcomes for youth; also called protective factors (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2007).

Discipline: the use of appropriate, logical consequences for behavior resulting in long term and positive behavioral changes (Ohio Department of Education, 2007, p. 36).

Disproportionality: structured probability with which subgroup youth are more likely to be categorized than general population (O'Connor & Fernandez, 2006).

Dropout rate: percentage of students who voluntarily withdraw from school prior to graduation (Christie, Nelson & Jolivet, 2004).

Early intervention strategies: approaches that identify and address the early onset of risk factors and/or non-academic barriers to learning among students at risk for academic failure and other problem behaviors; also called selected and/or secondary prevention approaches (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2007).

Exclusionary practices: suppression of student misbehavior through removal from an educational setting, such as time-out, suspension, expulsion (Cartledge & Lo, 2006).

Intervention treatment strategies: approaches that address the intensive needs of students who are experiencing severe or chronic problems and needs, also called intensive and/or tertiary prevention approaches (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2007).

Natural raters: adequacy of an individual's performance as rated by person(s) who are present in the environment (Kellam, Ling, Merisca, Brown & Ialongo, 1998).

Non-academic barriers: factors that impede academic achievement among youth but are not academically related, also called risk factors (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2007).

Office discipline referral (ODR): information patterns used to assess school safety (Irvin et al., 2006).

Ohio Department of Education (ODE): To avoid confusion with the Oregon Department of Education, the Ohio Department of Education is rarely abbreviated in this study; when "ODE" appears, it does refer to Ohio. <http://www.ode.state.oh.us>

Ohio Integrated Systems Model (OISM): three-tiered model of academic and behavior intervention (Stollar, Poth, Curtis & Cohen, 2006). OISM has been replaced by the Tri-Tier Model of School Improvement Support.

Positive Behavior Support PBS: a three-tiered systems approach aimed at increasing prosocial/positive behaviors among students, while preventing problem behavior (Glover, 2007).

Prevention and promotion strategies: approaches designed to promote positive, healthy development among all students by fostering protective factors and other assets that contribute to positive outcomes for students; also call universal or primary prevention approaches (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2007).

Protective factors: counterparts to risk factors; resilience (Morrison et al., 2004).

Punishment: focuses on the action, not the cause. Punishment requires little change in the child's beliefs and has little instructional value (Ohio Department of Education, 2007, p. 36).

Risk factors: individual and environmental influences that predict negative outcomes for children (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2007, Morrison et al., 2004).

Safety: freedom from danger, harm, or loss (Morrison et al., 2004).

School-wide intervention: promotes and supports positive student behavior; proactive (Dee & Boyle, 2006).

School-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS): system change to minimize or prevent behavior problems (Sugai & Horner, 2006).

Security: freedom from anxiety or apprehension of danger or risk (Morrison et al., 2004).

Social-emotional learning: a process through which students and adults acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need to recognize and manage their emotions, demonstrate care and concern for others, establish positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and handle challenging situations constructively. Resultant knowledge, attitudes, and skills are sometimes defined as protective factors or developmental assets (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2007).

Status variable: predictors of school success that educators have little ability to change, such as socioeconomic status (Christenson & Thurlow, 2004).

Suspension: disciplinary sanction that requires a student to be excluded from school (Skiba & Peterson, 2002).

School-wide Information System (SWIS): The School-Wide Information System is a web-based information system designed to help school personnel to use office referral data to design school-wide and individual student interventions (SWIS, 2008).

Zero tolerance – policy mandating predetermined consequences for specified behaviors (Stader, 2004).

### *Research Design*

This study used a naturalistic, interpretive approach to examine practices and perceptions of Ohio school leaders using SWPBS. The study was restricted to Ohio schools implementing SWPBS practices for one or more years.

Three sources of on-site data were used: interviews, document reviews, and observations. School leaders, including the building administrator and at least one other member of the SWPBS leadership team, were identified for semi-structured interviews. These semi-structured interviews explored participants' perceptions of SWPBS, experiences with SWPBS, implementation of the discipline program, and the significance of SWPBS practices. Documents relating to SWPBS were reviewed, including student handbooks, sample discipline forms, school discipline data, and newsletters. Observations of settings were conducted to understand events and actions.

Comparisons of consumer data, interviews, and observations with theoretical constructs were made to triangulate or validate this study. Data management and analysis of interviews, observations, and documents followed conventions of qualitative practices and IRB specifications.

### *Summary*

Student behavior concerns, and efforts toward resolution, are not new to American education. Within recent decades, student and school safety concerns have been additional challenges to school discipline efforts. Endeavors to educate a diverse

student population toward high academic standards have resulted in increased reliance on exclusionary practices. A noticeable alternative is the systemic approach toward problem prevention. School-wide positive behavior support is one such effort that is discussed in greater length in the next chapter. Understanding how educational leaders perceive and practice SWPBS is imperative for student and school safety and security, academic progress, and improved social skills.

## Chapter 2

### Review of Literature

What seems self-evident in daily classroom experience – the disruptiveness of certain student behaviors and the sense that these behaviors somehow must change – has deep, tangled roots within schools and society itself. Beyond the initial, frustration-ridden impulse to call some students ‘bad’ or ‘disordered’ runs a host of complex issues about how our society raises and schools children.

Examining these issues leads us to explore how we have come to view and treat challenging children, a journey that brings us inevitably to interrogate ourselves – to question who we are and what we think we are doing. (Danforth & Smith, 2005, p. 13)

While polls suggest some public empathy for the many challenges facing educators, the public still “expects the schools to be the agent for change” (Rose & Gallop, 2006, p. 55). School personnel may be tempted to apply deficit theories in blaming students, parents, and communities for student problems. Studies emphasize the positive impact of school characteristics on student learning, including challenging curriculum, high expectations, and respect for student differences (Nieto, 1999).

“Reforming school structures alone will not lead to substantive differences, however, if such changes are not also accompanied by profound changes in how we as educators

think about our students; that is, what we believe they deserve and are capable of achieving” (Nieto, p. 379).

The tendency to blame students for behavior problems and to react with punishment has been a pervasive pattern of discipline for the past century. While school discipline concerns are not new phenomena, the fear of violence in school settings has led to a proliferation of legislation in recent decades. There appears to be an underlying faulty analogy between criminal justice and school discipline (Gushee, 1984). State and federal legislation has been enacted to maintain safe schools. Policies and practices, however well designed, are not enough; we must also change perception.

An alternate to emphasizing reactive and criminal treatment of student behavior is viewing discipline through a system’s perspective. Understanding contributing factors to a successful, safe, orderly learning environment is imperative; for example, the quality of the instructional program has been viewed as a critical factor in reducing discipline problems. Research supports a shift towards implementing proactive behavior supports, viewing safety as a system goal, offering training and support, applying research-based practices, and using data to inform policy revision. By accepting the role of change agent and managing the resources that impact behavior, school leaders may be able to reshape school discipline practices. The following section explores the need to discipline youth and the various discipline responses that have been applied.

### *History of Student Discipline*

#### *Origins of Discipline Practices in Public Education*

In 1709, Cotton Mather implored his fellow colonists to send their children to school to ‘qualify them for future Serviceableness and have their

Manners therewithal wellformed under a Laudable Discipline’ to prevent ‘barbarous ignorance’ leading to “outrageous wickedness” that could threaten the very survival of the colony (Mather 1828/1975, p. 21, as cited in Irvin et. al, 2004, p. 131).

Prior to 1900, American schools applied Protestant morality in forging the immigrant child into a civilized citizen (Danforth & Smith, 2005). With the turn-of-the-century, industrialization brought a series of social concerns, including disease, crime, and poverty, to the schools. The concept of juvenile delinquency captured the public concern about youths with problems and the desire to intervene on youths’ behalf. The initial intervention effort was dedicated toward social reform, but in 1915 the effort took a dramatic turn toward viewing the child as evidencing defective character. With the view of the child as deficient, helping professions flourished. In an effort to prepare less promising children for factory work, tracking and special education programs began to take shape.

Another factor shaping education in the late 1800s to early 1900s was the move toward compulsory attendance (Provasnik, 2006). Compulsory attendance, legislated rather than initiated by educators, introduced both a more diverse student population and a requirement to provide education for a longer period of time. Children with special needs were recognized as capable of learning at least minimal skills. These children with special needs and children considered delinquent were viewed as in need of the formative practices of public education (Baker, 2004). Maintaining children in educational settings for a specified number of years was intended to forge civic development and common language skills (Russo, 2006).



Following World War II, psychiatry devised childhood mental health classifications that differentiated normal from abnormal behavior. Within the education field, problem behavior was conceptualized as an emotional disturbance (ED) warranting specialized education. With the advent of ED programs, behaviorism replaced the psychodynamic model of teaching students with behavior difficulties. Concerns have arisen in more recent decades that ED placement practices have resulted in overrepresentation of racial and ethnic minority students as well as overrepresentation of students from lower socio-economic groups (Harris-Murri, King, & Rostenberg, 2006; Mooney, Epstein, & Nelson, 2003).

While concerns about student behavior have frustrated educators since colonial times, the kinds of behavior, the societal problems impacting schools, and the ways in which professionals conceptualize problems have changed (Danforth & Smith, 2005). The United States Department of Education study, pre September 11<sup>th</sup>, found that most schools reported low levels of violence and that visitors felt safe (Cantor et al., 2002). Yet Garbarino and deLara (2002) indicate that a majority of teens do not feel secure at school. “Experts tell us that it is bullying, not a terrorist attack, that teens see as the biggest threat that frightens them and interferes with their education” (National School Safety Center, 2004, p. 6).

### *Legislation and Litigation*

Episodes of violence on school campuses, including multiple-victim homicides, have led to policy development at the federal and state levels. Federal legislation since the mid-1990s has made an effort at increasing school safety (Rozalski & Yell, 2004). Examples include the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1994, the

Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 (GFSA), Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, the Safe Schools Act of 1994, and the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1997. The Gun-Free Schools Act is of particular significance since it made funds contingent upon a state's enacting zero tolerance policy (ZTP) (McAndrews, 2001). The initial intent was gun safety, but most states broadened this intent. Policy has been formulated to reduce a plethora of activities that threaten school safety, particularly in antisocial behavior, violence, weapons, drugs, and firearms.

Stader (2004) defined "zero tolerance" as "school district policy that mandates predetermined consequences of punishment for specific offenses, regardless of the circumstances, disciplinary history, or age of the student involved" (p. 62). Most schools now use zero-tolerance policies, and nationwide data suggest a decline in serious behavior affecting school safety. The 1994 Gun-Free Schools Act (GFSA) does allow administrative modification of disciplinary action on an individual basis, and more expulsions are reported as modified. The policy does, however, make it difficult to maintain a rational approach to decision making, with severe consequences being applied to students who unknowingly violate the GFSA. The greatest challenge of zero tolerance policies is the disproportionate representation of minorities in suspension and expulsion data. Another difficulty with exclusionary discipline practice is that the action denies a student's right to education, a right that is guaranteed by the state. Recommendations include student-centered and flexible discipline practices that result in lower expulsion rates. Risk assessment and service from community agencies are also suggested; severe infractions need to be referred for legal action and community therapy. Specific recommendations in finding balance include the following:

Collect, analyze, and disaggregate student discipline data; develop objective criteria to use in suspension/expulsion decisions; set and annually review qualitative and measurable objectives to reduce the number of suspensions and expulsions and prevent school violence, and work with students, parents, and community groups to articulate and explain school district policy and practice. (Stader, 2004, p. 65)

In Ohio, state legislation includes school safety planning and zero tolerance. School Safety Planning, O.R.C. 3313.535, requires protocols for addressing and responding to serious safety threats (the Ohio Department of Education, 2006). Zero Tolerance law, O.R.C. Section 3313.534, passed in the 1990's defines and prohibits school violence, as well as disruptive and inappropriate behaviors (the Ohio Department of Education, 2006). Policy implementation varies on breadth and depth of issues addressed under ZTP with some districts treating all incidents and issues with severity to serve as a strong deterrent. "Perhaps the biggest problem with zero-tolerance policies is inconsistent application and interpretation" (McAndrews, 2001, p. 2). In an examination of disciplinary policies, more than half of schools allowed out-of-school suspensions without services, transfer to alternative schooling, and removal of a student from school for remainder of year without services (ICES brief, 2007). These exclusionary practices are consistent with ZTP.

While school leaders are responsible for maintaining the safety and security of students, this obligation must be balanced by respect for students' constitutional rights (Essex, 2002). Litigation has also had an impact on school policy, with authors recommending the following practices for creating defensible discipline policies: "know

the law, follow the law, train all school staff, involve the community, evaluate the issue, intervene, and monitor your progress” (p. 517). Administrators are cautioned to avoid overreacting and to avoid being too lax. Essex (2002) advises school leaders to (a) develop defensible school policies, (b) communicate to students the precise behavior expected in school, (c) advise parents of discipline policy and procedures, (d) respond to infractions in a reflective, deliberate manner, (e) provide due process in suspension cases, (f) be aware of students’ Fourteenth Amendment rights, (g) ensure that use of authority is consistent with most parental practices, (h) take threats against students seriously, (i) establish reasonable rules and routines conducive to education, and (j) maintain the requirement of fundamental fairness in disciplinary cases (Essex, 2002). Interestingly, Zirkel (2006) in his review of a century of school law, notes a trend toward less legalization in the past three decades.

### *Educational Interpretation*

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) issued a memorandum that all students deserve a safe learning environment, teachers and administrators need tools to prevent and address discipline concerns, a balanced approach is needed to maintain school safety and protect rights of students, and Individual Educational Programs (IEP) for students requiring special education need to include well-designed behavior supports when indicated (Hartwig & Reusch, 2000, p. 240). “A balanced approach to discipline includes both proactive strategies to prevent problem behavior and well-specified, procedurally sound response to problem behaviors” (p. 246). Finding evidence of this balanced approach to discipline is the goal of this study.

In Ohio, a comprehensive school-wide prevention and instruction model is being implemented. Known as the Ohio Integrated Systems Model (OISM) for Academic and Behavior Supports, the intention of OISM (now called the Tri-Tier Model) is to implement supportive systems for addressing academic and behavior concerns for all children (Csanyi, 2006). These elements are in response to legislative requirements arising from the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (P.L. 108-446), the Operating Standards for Ohio's Schools, the Operating Standards for Ohio's Schools Serving Children with Disabilities, and the Ohio Academic Content Standards.

#### *School Districts' Interpretations*

Most schools have rules, policies, and practices that are similar among districts. Generally, teachers have managed classroom discipline issues until the behavior needed administrative intervention. Consequences for rule infractions are generally a form of punishment, including warnings, revoking privileges, informing parents, detention, and corporal punishment in some schools, suspension, alternative schooling, transfer, and expulsion.

#### *Theories of Behavior*

“People living in the twenty-first century will experience more rapid changes than in any other period in human history. These changes have necessitated theoretical shifts in our understanding of children” (Aldridge & Goldman, 2002, p. 67). Shifts in worldviews are called paradigms, or reference points for making meaning of our existence. Paradigms are broader than theories of development. The lessons learned are

critical to students' behavioral as well as academic needs, a process that "represents a shift in the agency's culture and how its members interact" (Grimes, Kurns, & Tilly, 2006, p. 241). The change in how school leaders are addressing discipline through systematic application of evidenced-based practice is consistent with a paradigm shift.

Three worldviews have dominated educational practices: organismic, mechanistic, and developmental contextualistic (Aldridge & Goldman, 2002). An organismic worldview places difficulties in learning within the child while developmental contextualists view interactions as crucial. The mechanistic worldview holds the child's environment as pivotal to understanding learning difficulties. Theories associated with the mechanistic viewpoint include Watson, Thorndike, and Skinner.

### *Psychological Theories*

*Behavioral and cognitive theories.* Psychological learning theories have dominated educational management of discipline problems and continue to do so. Prominent psychological theories include cognitive and behavioral (Hergenhahn & Olson, 1997). Cognitive theories include contributions from such notables as Jean Piaget, Edward Tolman, Albert Bandura, and Donald Norman. Behavioral theories can be divided into the associationistic theories of Ivan Pavlov, Edwing Guthrie, and William Estes and the functionalistic theories of Edward Thorndike, Clark Hull, and B.F. Skinner.

For educators, the differences between cognitive and behavioral theories can be conceptualized in five core areas: what is learned, the role of reinforcement, how problems are solved, assumptions made about the learner, and how generalization is explained (Hergenhahn & Olson, 1997).

Behaviorists view learning as habits and stimulus-response associations. Learning according to cognitive theorists involves information, principles, and insights (Hergenhahn & Olson, 1997). Rewards are inherent to behavioral theory; reinforcers serve to form and strengthen rate of response. Cognitive theories contend that reinforcers serve as information but do not directly contribute to learning. Problem solving occurs through trial-and-error methods according to behaviorists and by thinking according to cognitive theorists. Behaviorists assume the learner is open to structured influences; thus, educators can structure the environment in ways that optimize learning. According to cognitive theories, a teacher is reducing the learner's ambiguity and building interrelationships. Lastly, transfer of training is explained by behaviorists as occurring when elements among two situations are similar. Cognitive theorists explain situational learning as guided by application of principles.

Skinner's theory of learning, that basic relationships between stimuli and responses could be discovered, has profoundly influenced educational psychology (Hergenhahn & Olson, 1997). An extension of Skinner's theory is that many human problems could be resolved through functional analysis. The challenge to behavioral application, Skinner foresaw, was the "challenge ...of our cherished beliefs about ourselves, especially that human beings are rational, free, and dignified" (p. 107).

Influence of operant conditioning theory continues to be evidenced. For example, a systematic process for identifying and resolving school behavior problems has been delineated. Witt, VanDerHeyden and Gilbertson (2004) note that a linear problem-solving model is difficult because often multiple variables, those easily controlled and those not easily controlled, may influence behavior. The authors advanced several

principles contributing to effective outcomes, including the importance of antecedent strategies.

Another example of Skinner's influence can be seen in the search for antecedent behavior. Research on the predisposition to externalized behavior problems and low achievement includes the following antecedent factors: neurodevelopment immaturity, speech and language difficulties, and familial variables (Hinshaw, 1992).

*Influence of positive psychology.* The primary problem-solving paradigm of the last century featured a deficit model based on pathology. In educational system reform, problems were defined by lack of success, and difficulties with implementing change were viewed as resistance to intervention. A new paradigm for educational leaders, based on principles of positive psychology, offers more hopeful outcome of change by understanding human elements of change, and by applying evidence-based research. Shapiro (2000) calls for "a significant shift in our energies to partner with our colleagues in ...psychology, special education, and educational leadership and start attacking the problems in ways that will lead to academically healthy and successful generations of children yet to come" (p. 569).

Positive psychology, as initially used by Abraham Maslow, is a construct in psychology that is based on what is right, rather than what is wrong, with people. Historically, psychology has been about categorization of mental deficiencies and illnesses - a negative perspective. Positive psychology attempts to strike a balance by emphasizing the strengths of people and affirmative aspects of life. In positive psychology, flourishing signifies a life filled with wellbeing and improved health (Wikipedia, 2006).



Just as medical science has progressed from pathology and treatment of disease to prevention and wellness, so too, education can benefit from an emphasis on human potential and optimal functioning. The goal of positive psychology is to prevent or reduce the incidence of psychopathology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). In education, a comparable goal would be to prevent or reduce academic failure or to foster optimal academic skill acquisition for all students. This goal is remarkably similar to federal mandates in the No Child Left Behind Act.

### *Sociological Theories*

Dominant sociological theories include functionalism, conflict theory, interpretive theory, and critical theory (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999). For purposes of this research, two of the theories will be briefly described.

*Interpretive theory.* Interpretive theory, a sociological construct, explains how people understand and make meaning of their social settings and events, and how this understanding, in turn, reshapes the setting. “Behind the different types of interpretive theory, there lies the shared assumption that we cannot understand human affairs properly unless we grasp the relevant meanings” (Bevir & Rhodes, 2003, p. 3). One method of understanding the relevant meanings is through examination of values.

Understanding how education explains and justifies approaches to discipline requires discussion of values and ideology. Values, the standards and principles that underlie thinking, can be understood as self-interest (economic interests and power), general social values (order and individualism), democratic values (liberty, equality, and fraternity), and economic values (efficiency and economic growth) (Fowler, 2004).

Values congeal to form an ideology, an interpretive lens used to understand experience (Tozer, Senese, Violas, & Tozer, 2006).

Schooling plays an important role in teaching and legitimating a society's ideology. The ideology served by the public school is almost inevitably the dominant ideology of the larger society. This suggests both potential strengths and weaknesses in schooling. Whereas schooling may help people share in the life of their society, it may also help blind them to problems within it. (p. 10)

Zero-tolerance policy (ZTP) approaches offer examples of how values impact student discipline. ZTP has been promulgated on the notion that punitive consequences follow serious aggressive behavior in a logical sequence. This notion is consistent with the value of order (Fowler, 2004). The value of order is in conflict with the values of individualism and freedom. There is an assumption of equality in ZTP's premise of safety for all children, but research on restrictive discipline practice indicates disproportionate consequences for students of low income and racial diversity (Black, 2004, Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997). Successful policy should result in a decrease in exclusionary consequences, but ZTP has resulted in increases. This suggests that the value of order is in conflict with the value of equality.

While it may seem clear that preventative discipline measures may lead to better outcomes for students, prevention programs and support services are costly (Gushee, 1984). Punishment and exclusionary practices are more cost-effective practices which suggest that ZTP places a premium on the value of efficiency at the cost of the value of quality. Zero-tolerance policy can be characterized by the premium placed on the values

of order and economy. As such, ZTP is, arguably, most closely aligned with conservatism ideology, particularly religious conservatism.

*Critical theory.* Critical theory, primarily a social or political construct, has gained ground in education in recent decades (Aldridge & Goldman, 2002). Critical theorists attempt to understand the power distribution in relationships that impact oppression of groups and to improve the human condition. “Power permeates education systems and the policies that shape them” (Fowler, 2004, p. 49). Historically, power based on authority has characterized public education. From the late twentieth century to present time, authoritarian claims to power have been weakened in society and in education. Understanding and using alternative sources of power is essential for school leaders (Fowler, 2004).

This study attempted to understand the sociological aspects of values and authority evidenced by school leaders in contemporary discipline practices.

### *Organizational Theories*

“System change happens when the people involved in a system get down to dealing with the most fundamental concerns that they have, both individually and collectively” (Havelock & Hamilton, 2004, p.184). Senge (2006) views the schools as systems with potential to transform children into effective citizens of a global community.

Deming (1994) advanced principles of cooperation and transformation of management style through a system of profound knowledge: appreciation for a system,

knowledge about variation, theory of knowledge, and psychology. The job of a leader is to transform the organization.

Jenkins (2003) has revisited Deming's work and applied it to education. The aim for an educational system, according to Jenkins, is to increase success. Improvement in the system needs to be defined and measured. Similar to Deming, Jenkins contends that children are born with enthusiasm to learn; educators have a responsibility to maintain motivation through cooperative rather than competitive psychological practices.

Discipline practices that emphasize success and cooperation are consistent with principles of systems thinking.

Jenkins contributed an understanding that educators can develop supply, the input to the system. Supply is related to risk management of the nonacademic problems affecting learning as well as the resource management of developing community partnerships. Jenkins, expanding on Deming's management principle of reduction in variation, has reminded leaders of their responsibility. Among the methods of reducing variation is control of input/supply. Prevention of problems is consistent with controlling input and reducing variation.

System efficiency is enhanced by reduction of waste, including time and money (Jenkins, Roettger, & Roettger, 2007). Application of proactive behavioral supports is consistent with increasing system efficiency. As the authors Jenkins, Roettger, and Roettger note, "Students can not learn in chaos; discipline is essential. Increased productivity, however, would mean that the assistant principal is spending 600 hours per year on discipline rather than the former 1,200 hours per year" (p. 164). Another example of system efficiency is the increase in instructional time afforded by decrease in

exclusionary discipline practices (Lee, 2005). Discipline practices that result in efficient practice, preventative practice, instructional interventions, and interaction among educators are consistent with systems approaches (Skiba & Peterson, 2003).

### *Pedagogy*

Paradigms and theories ultimately result in particular education practices, or pedagogy. Four basic models of practice are currently in evidence: transmission, transaction, inquiry, and transformation (Aldridge & Goldman, 2002, p. 75).

Transmission is a traditional method involving prescriptive programming measured by a product. Transaction is still guided, but meaning is constructed by learners. Inquiry involves the development of an environment that invites discovery. Transformation advances the component of inquiry to broad applications (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). This research collected evidence of SWPBS leadership practices.

### *Ineffective Outcomes of Discipline Practices*

Cartledge and Johnson (2004), synthesizing research on school violence, found that minority students are more vulnerable to policies resulting in suspension and expulsion. For example, the minority students are referred more frequently for disciplinary action. Another vulnerability is more restricted educational placements occurring for minority students.

Chrisle, Nelson, and Jolivet (2004) identified school-level variables that were highly correlated with suspension rate. Suspension is viewed as an ineffective practice, but is popular due to the NCLB Act and zero tolerance policies. Suspension use is also disproportionately applied to males, students from low SES backgrounds, minorities, and

those with disabilities or low IQs. Although student misbehavior does result in suspension, it is more affected by school-controlled factors, including administrative structure, teacher beliefs, and biases.

Few schools used any specific process to examine incident data. About 25% of the schools surveyed had individualized interventions in place to service the academic and social needs of targeted students (Cantor et al., 2002). The United States Department of Education study has recommended applying different methods to different types of discipline problems occurring within school systems (Cantor & Wright, 2002, p.ii).

Much is known about characteristics of ineffective behavior programs (Erickson, Mattaini, & McGuire, 2004). Ineffective interventions include one or more of the following characteristics: identifying a single source as the problem, blaming of the individual, focusing on deficits or pathologies of individuals or subgroups, using punishment and threat, and using peer-led interventions.

Even the push for higher academic performance can inadvertently trigger a heavier reliance on punitive practices. The reliance on the ineffective practice of suspension is perhaps evidence of an implementation dip. Fullan defined implementation dip as “literally a dip in performance and confidence as one encounters an innovation that requires new skills and understandings” (p. 40). What are educators to use to counter implementation dip in discipline in the quest for ever higher student achievement?

### *Trends in Discipline*

The new skills and understandings required for effective discipline include using data to understand needs and to revise plans, applying evidence-based practices, and consulting among school team members. There is an emphasis on prevention and early

intervention. These shifts are consistent with positive psychology and organizational theory.

There is a more recent distinction being made between status variables and alterable (behavioral) variables (Christenson & Thurlow, 2004). Status variables refer to predictors of school success that educators have little ability to change, such as socioeconomic status. Alterable variables refer to predictors of school success that educators have the ability to change, such as suspension rates. There has been a shift toward researching alterable variables.

Another shift has been toward framing research in positive terms. Instead of studying school dropout rates, school completion rates have become preferred since they reflect positive outcomes for students.

Of the more recent studies looking at problem prevention, Petras et al. (2004) emphasize the importance of discriminating “various pathways early in the developmental course so that the limited resources available for prevention and intervention efforts may be more precisely targeted” (p. 920). McIntosh et al. (2006) have delineated two pathways to behavior problems (p. 276): a social behavior deficit pathway or an academic skill deficit pathway. The authors explored the academic skill deficit pathway, in which a child begins education with learning difficulties but no evidence of problem behavior. As learning challenges persist, the child exhibits aversive behavior. Unwittingly, the teacher may reinforce the pathway by removing the child from the classroom when avoidant behavior is displayed.

Greene (2001) also describes pathways, or individual predispositions, to behavior difficulties. These pathways include difficult temperament, ADHD, social skill deficits,

language processing impairments, mood and anxiety disorders, nonverbal learning disabilities, and sensory integrative dysfunction (p.26). Central to Greene's contribution to behavioral theory is that

...children do not choose to be explosive and noncompliant – any more than a child would choose to have a reading disability – but are delayed in the process of developing the skills that are crucial to being flexible and tolerating frustration...  
(Greene, 2001, p. 13)

More recent research has looked at predictors of behavior difficulties. Poor socio-behavior outcomes have been connected with poverty (Bradley & Corwyn, 2000; Loeber et al., 1993, as cited in Petras et al., 2004). Variables that the researchers considered predictive of later-onset aggression included less parental vigilance consistent with greater antisocial peer affiliation, and lower academic skills. Protective factors that appear to reduce incidence of antisocial behavior during adolescence include higher reading achievement, higher-income families, and residence in stable neighborhoods (Petras et. al., 2004). Peterson et al. (1992, referenced in Petras et al., 2004) hypothesized a buffering effect of early reading achievement, perhaps due to greater acceptance within peer group, engagement in educational processes, hope for future employment, intellectual ability, or, possibly, ability to escape detection.

School completion studies place an emphasis on student engagement. Academic progress, attendance, and GPA, are indicators of academic and behavioral engagement. Another form of student commitment is cognitive and psychological engagement. Indicators of cognitive and psychological engagement include measures of meta-cognition and relationship with peers and staff. These indicators of engagement predict



higher graduation rates. Most noticeable in engagement studies are the alterable factors of smaller class sizes, individualized student learning programs, and caring learning environments (Christenson & Thurlow, 2004).

Another critical evolution in behavior management is the shift from considering individual factors to understanding the learning environment. Environmental context is viewed as important in understanding an individual's response, allowing study of the "adaptive capacity of the individual to respond adequately to the social task demands of the social fields" (Kellam et al., 1998, p. 181). This study is an indication of the importance of early primary classroom management of aggressive behavior.

"School staff are being held responsible for ensuring safe environments where all children can learn appropriate academic and social skills" (Irvin et al., 2004, p. 131). This quest for safety and for effective learning environment has led to use of data. Numbers of office discipline referrals (ODR) have been a useful and readily available source of data within schools. Students having no office discipline referrals tend to have higher grade point averages (GPAs) and lower levels of family conflict. Discipline problems of boys at 8 to 10 years of age tend to be predictive of teen and adult violence. Uses of ODR data include: measurement of aggression, comparison of intervention practices among or within schools, prediction of behavior of student subgroups, and provision of early identification of students in need of specialized behavioral supports. "Individual student histories of behavioral and disciplinary problems may be useful in planning behavioral supports for children in schools" (Irvin, Tobin, Sprague, Sugai, & Vincent, 2004, p. 142).

Implementation of response to intervention (RTI) methodology requires optimizing conditions to improve outcomes for all students (Basche et al., 2006). Indeed,

school leaders have begun implementing evidenced-based practices and programs that have reduced exclusionary discipline practices. Both positive psychology and positive behavior supports have influenced these systematic approaches to student behavior.

Citing earlier research (Juel, 1988; Kazdin, 1987; Walker, & Severson, 1992), McIntosh et al. (2006) note the urgency of intervening on behavior, as well as academics, during primary grade levels, especially kindergarten through third grade. Leff, Power, and Manz (2001) conducted a review of aggression prevention programs for young children. The reasoning is that early aggressive behavior not only relates to later aggression, but aggressive acts tend to develop in a “life-course” (p. 345) progression from mild through extremely serious. Prevention needs to focus on universal programs emphasizing collaboration among stakeholders, a mechanism for collecting efficacy data and measuring transfer of skills among settings, and tailoring programs to unique district characteristics.

One study attempted to find school risk factors associated with nonresponsiveness to SWPBS. The variables studied were ODR and Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy (DIBELS). There was an inverse relationship between ODR and DIBELS, suggesting that reading achievement is a protective factor in predicting problem behavior (McIntosh, Horner, Chard, Bolland, & Good III, 2006).

Much is known about violence prevention and characteristics of effective prevention programs (Erickson, Mattaini, & McGuire, 2004). Practices include enhancing positive behavior, training in social skills, providing supportive training for all staff, respecting individual differences, increasing positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior, clearly communicating rules and expectations, and monitoring data. The

authors speak to the science of constructing a school culture of supports.

Active leadership is essential to the construction of culture.

School systems have typically addressed problems reactively - that is, after an incident or problem occurs. Primary prevention represents a paradigm shift: preemptively managing problems to prevent occurrence.

It is important to recognize that, to a certain extent, prevention is already evident in school functioning. Media coverage of educational issues, legal mandates, and parental advocacy have contributed to an awareness of prevention. Most educators can articulate a list of programs that are preventative in nature. Terjesen et al. (2004) believe that “fostering a system-wide program toward reinforcing positive aspects of child development may help in the long-term reduction in referrals for academic and behavioral difficulties” (p. 166).

The most common prevention efforts used by schools were instructional and therapeutic (Crosse et al., 2002). The study further indicated that larger scale interventions were of higher quality than those aimed at altering individual student behavior. The planning for individual intervention was viewed as inadequate. Schools, therefore, need to increase diversity of interventions to individual student behavior need. The study recommends that schools “adopt a ‘continuous improvement’ process, whereby quality of implementation, results of activities, and incidents of problem behavior are tracked to serve as a basis for modifying activities and developing future plans” (Crosse et al., p. ix).

To insure that all its students succeed, Ohio has developed guidelines, *A Comprehensive System of Learning Supports*, detailing the system-wide planning

needed to build and maintain an effective educational program (the Ohio Department of Education, 2007). This plan is consistent with positive behavior support, a systematic approach to student discipline.

### *Positive Behavior Support*

Positive behavior support has its origins in applied behavior analysis. During earlier eras, schools were attempting to improve student behavior and reduce vandalism (Mayer, Butterworth, Nafpaktits, & Sulzar-Azaroff, 1983). The application of operant conditioning learning theory on behavior management, or discipline, dates back to the mid-1960s (Lee, 2005). In the late 1980s, the term “positive behavior support” was an outgrowth of special education focus on minimal use of punishment.

School leaders are responsible for maintaining the safety and security of students (Essex, 2002). A three-tiered systems approach, PBS is aimed at increasing prosocial/positive behaviors among all students while preventing problem behavior (Glover, 2007). Both environmental factors and individual behavior are considered in PBS. With an emphasis on problem prevention and use of positive behavioral strategies, PBS is an alternative to reactive, punitive, and exclusionary practices. An outgrowth of operant conditioning learning theory, PBS has emerged as an applied behavioral science (Lee, 2005). Horner and Sugai (2000) envision a reduction in problem behaviors as school-wide positive behavior supports are implemented.

### *School-wide Positive Behavior Support*

School-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) is designed as a systemic change that prevents or lessens problem occurrence. The empirical evidence on which SWPBS is based is consistent with “evidence based” practices (Sugai & Horner, 2006, p. 247).

As Dee and Boyle (2006) indicate, PBS creates a safe learning atmosphere that promotes academic success for all students. Within school environments, PBS continues to undergo rigorous research. Positive behavior support is credited with increased use of instructional time, decreased reliance on exclusionary practices, and improvement in school culture (Lee, 2005).

Ohio's Integrated System's Model and SWPBS have similar elements of integrated system-wide models: administrative leadership, strategic planning processes, evidenced-based practices, data-based progress monitoring, culturally responsive practices, three-tiered instruction, and support (Csanyi, 2006). The consistency of system features between the two programs facilitates generalization of practice.

Consistent with system-wide initiatives, SWPBS has developed pedagogy in its implementation of practice (Lee, 2005). Three levels of treatment are intended to create school-wide support: primary, secondary, and tertiary. Tertiary is often used to indicate treatment or remediation of a problem condition. Secondary is used to refer to an early identification of a difficulty or problem. Primary is viewed as a proactive tactic that prevents problems from developing (Akin-Little et al., 2004).

*Concerns regarding PBS.* Both the theory and practice of PBS have come under attack. One such criticism is the use of punishment. Theoretically, applied behavioral researchers maintain that punishment is only a minimal part of their science (Lee, 2005). Further, PBS has been criticized for lacking the thoroughness that typifies applied behavioral science.

Jenson (2006) cites several barriers to preventative behavioral practices: assessing implementation fidelity and monitoring adaptability. Implementation fidelity refers to the

consistent use of the program. Adaptation is the variation in the program to address individual differences. Strict adherents of implementation fidelity believe a program needs to be delivered with precision. By contrast, practitioners favoring adaptability strive to meet diverse subgroup needs. Jenson has recommended further study of behavioral programs in fidelity and adaptability.

Additional challenges regarding SWPBS include expenditures of time and money; SWPBS “typically takes two to three years to fully instantiate in a single school and requires extensive technical assistance as well as professional and staff development activities” (Lee, 2005, p. 391). Carr (2006) delineated four questions regarding SWPBS: (a) Do students exhibiting more significant behaviors fair more poorly? (b) Are tertiary-level supports less effective in SWPBS? (c) Does SWPBS increase polarization between special and general education? (d) Do tertiary-level supports become less prevalent due to cost?

*Proliferation of PBS.* The status of PBS is reflected in the number of states implementing SWPBS practices, including Florida, Maryland, Hawaii, Oregon, in the mandatory practice of functional behavior analysis in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), in the emergence of national and international websites and conferences, and in the scholarly journal, *the Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions* (Cohen, Kincaid, & Childs, 2007; Lee, 2005; Nakasato, 2000; the Oregon Department of Education, 2007). School-wide positive behavior support is expanding at a rapid rate, and is expected to surpass 8000 schools in the near future (Cohen et al.). Research is consistent in reporting positive outcomes in systems using SWPBS. Understanding how successful outcomes are being achieved by schools is imperative.

### *Summary*

This chapter reviewed historical perspectives on school discipline, legislation enacted to maintain safe and orderly schools, theories (psychological, sociological, and organizational) that impact understanding of discipline, ineffective outcomes of discipline, and the paradigm shift toward preventative practices –notably PBS.

Understanding how educational leaders perceive and practice SWPBS is imperative for student and school safety and academic progress. The next chapter delineates how perspective will be obtained from educational leaders practicing SWPBS.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

#### *Research Design*

Finding and promulgating educational leadership practices that foster effective school discipline was the quest of this research. These social abstractions (discipline and educational leadership) were best clarified through the perceptions of those implementing the practices (Seidman, 2006). In order to understand the underlying perceptions of school leaders that guide these effective practices, interviews of school practitioners were conducted. Interviewing, a basic method of inquiry, respects the worth of the informant's story as a means of knowing (Seidman, 2006). "Getting close to others means grappling with the complexity of their lives as individuals, as members of groups, as participants in the cultures and social and material structures that frame their lives. It means being accustomed to never being able to know all, never being certain about the status of interpretations, 'findings', 'knowledge'" (Schostak, 2002, p. 92). Qualitative research is uniquely suited to foster meaning, define context, identify unexpected phenomena, clarify processes, and develop causal explanations (Maxwell, 2005).

As Dee and Boyle (2006) have indicated, SWPBS creates a safe learning atmosphere that promotes academic success for all students. School leaders are making a difference in student behavior and learning and in system safety, as well as effectiveness, by proactively teaching social skills. Effective school leadership practices accelerate this



system change/paradigm shift. I have studied the school leaders' practices and perceptions using appreciative inquiry. The research question of this study was as follows: What are the attitudes and actions of Ohio school leaders using SWPBS towards discipline? This question required research methodology that was particularly sensitive to subtle influences impacting SWPBS system innovation.

In order to describe the effective leadership practices of Ohio schools using SWPBS, as well as construe meaning of this approach to student behavior in education settings, an appreciative inquiry of interpretive collective case study was used (Frankel & Wallen, 2006; McGinty, 2001; Peshkin, 2001). Since SWPBS is a relatively new phenomenon in Ohio schools, this qualitative study attempted to "study the 'leading edge' of change" (Schofield, 1990, p. 215). The methodology of study respected the multifaceted dimension of researching both effective student discipline practices, specifically SWPBS, and the educational leadership perceptions and practices that support this effort.

### *Setting*

This study maintained a commitment to a naturalistic, interpretive approach in which the research occurred in a real-life school setting. A purposive criterion sample (Patten, 2005) was obtained from Ohio school districts actively implementing SWPBS for one or more years within one or more buildings in the district. Nominations were provided by the State Support Team, part of the Ohio Department of Education invested in regional focused service delivery. The study was planned to sample three Ohio schools using SWPBS - ideally rural, suburban, urban settings. The actual study sampled three distinct Ohio district typologies: an urban district, a rural/agricultural district, and a

rural/small town district (ODE Typology Data, 2008). Additional information regarding each site is described in Chapter 4.

Following the nomination of Ohio SWPBS sites from the State Support Team, a phone call to the building's principal was made to invite participation. Once the principal expressed preliminary interest in the SWPBS research, a formal letter was sent to the principal inviting participation in the dissertation research. To expedite correspondence, a sample approval letter was sent with the request for site approval. Approval for the study was requested and obtained from the Human Subjects Research and Review Committee of the University of Toledo. Once institutional approval was secured, research appointments were scheduled at each site. Participant consent forms were provided for each administrator and SWPBS team member interviewed prior to the study (see Appendix A). The consent forms specified the individual's role within the study, right to revoke permission, right to confidentiality, and right to obtain results upon project completion.

The district and building demographic information were collected and reported from the Ohio Department of Education. Reduction in rates of suspension and expulsion has been associated with district use of SWPBS (Horner, Todd, Lewis-Palmer, Irvin, Sugai, & Bolland, 2004). School discipline data were examined for reduction in suspension/expulsion rates. Demographic information, consumable data available through ODE, included the following: district average daily enrollment (ADM), per-pupil expenditure, district report card grade, percentage of students on free and reduced lunches, student minority representation, percentage of students identified with disability, and pre- and post-SWPBS suspension/expulsion data.

The School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET) (Horner et al., 2004) has been used as a measure of school-wide PBS practices. Horner and a team of university researchers (2004) studied the psychometric properties of the SET, including variability, and reliability. It was anticipated that SET data would be requested and reported from each site for multiple years, if available. However, none of the three sites utilized the SET. Instead two sites used the SWIS (School-wide Information System) and the third site's principal indicated a plan to use the SWIS.

Within a purposeful sample of three districts using SWPBS, members of the SWPBS leadership team were identified for semi-structured interviews. The interviews were designed to follow a structure (Seidman, 2006): conceptualizing participants' experiences, reconstructing how SWPBS is implemented, and reflecting on the significance of SWPBS practices. More specifically, the interview questions were designed with an appreciative inquiry (AI) focus. Appreciative inquiry is a theoretical construct that replaces deficit-focused problem solving with an intentional search for what is effective (Watkins & Mohr, 2001). AI is founded on a belief that human systems are created and imagined by those who live and work within them. The interview questions were guided by AI with inquiries into values, accomplishments, effective practices, and visions of the leaders implementing SWPBS (see Appendix B).

### *Researcher's Role*

My role was to inquire, through observations and interviews, on school practices that prevent student behavior occurrences. Experiences have been obtained in the field of public education and in qualitative research methodology. Familiarity with education has been amassed through more than thirty years in the field of public education working as a

school psychologist. Familiarity with the research role has been acquired through field observations, document and artifact collection and analysis, and interviews in a participatory research project, during the summer of 2007 (Hamer & Underfer-Babalis, 2007).

*Subjectivity.* My interest was to understand effective practices in problem prevention in educational settings. Further, it was my intent that this study captured evidence of positive, proactive, democratic practices in education. I was mindful of Schostak's (2003) caution, "How an individual perceives the world is never a simple matter of just opening the eyes and looking – the data of senses are always pre-organized culturally, psychologically" (p. 3).

I had a strong contention that school leaders were making a difference in student behavior, in learning, and in system safety and effectiveness by implementing SWPBS, and that these effective school leadership practices accelerate this system change/paradigm shift. My beliefs motivated me to search for evidence of these practices, to seek and understand the positive intentions of school leaders, and to synthesize and extract meaning of this multifarious inquiry.

Specific principles valued by the researcher in planning this study were as follows:

- Appropriate and timely preventative practices, behavioral and academic, result in successful educational outcomes for all children.
- Behavior support continuums with evidenced-based practices are essential to student safety achievement and to maximizing system operation.

- Effective leadership and support services are vital to student and system gains.
- Children have a right to learn in a supportive educational climate. Behaviors that are essential to this supportive climate need to be taught, monitored, and reinforced.
- Behavior supports are most likely to be preventative when using system-wide positive, strengths-based approaches.

These beliefs that motivate this learning endeavor also introduced potential bias. My quest for evidence of SWPBS may have lead me to collect data that are consistent with my belief that positive discipline practices were occurring in schools. This propensity was countered by trustworthiness features, which are discussed later in this chapter.

Research may be contaminated by program developers who evaluate effectiveness and by researchers who dislike a particular approach (Borman, 2005; Cronback et al., 1980). Neither I, nor anyone on my dissertation committee, had affiliation with the SWPBS program under study. I did not conduct research within my district of employment.

*Ethics.* Three principles of ethical research were advanced by House (1990): “...principles of mutual respect, of noncoercion and nonmanipulation, and of support for democratic values and institutions” (p. 158). Mutual respect was manifested by my attempt to understand administrative perceptions and by giving consideration to “the strong possibility that people have good reasons for doing what they do...” (House, p. 159). Indeed, I followed House’s advice to focus “...upon the word, actions, and deeds of

the participants...” (p. 163). When interviewing, I used appreciative inquiry to guide the topic discussion toward effective practices of SWPBS. This collection of evidence through interviewing was focused on finding what is working for SWPBS school leaders in advancing student and system outcomes.

Noncoercion and nonmanipulation refer to potential harm to research participants. The IRB informed consent was one safeguard of this ethical principle. The use of appreciative inquiry was consistent with this ethic; interviewing of school PBS leaders was conducted in a manner that respected the individual’s integrity and extracted positive perceptions and practices. Through unconditional positive inquiry, AI respected the people and topic (Ludema, Cooperrider, & Barrett, 2001).

The third ethical requirement advanced by House is the “...obligation to support the democratic values...” of our society (p.161), comparable to “attaining democratic aims such as fair representation, equity, and social justice” (Beach, 2003, p. 865). This researcher was dedicated to highlighting educational practices that benefit all students. The purposive school sample was constructed based on evidence of practices beneficial to all students.

Two main ethical principles advanced by Smith (1990) are anonymity and informed consent. An IRB form was given to each individual in the study, including the right to participate as well as to withdraw consent. Confidentiality was a specific guarantee of the research proposal. Indeed, at each site the principal verified that names of personnel and students were not to be released.

To maintain confidentiality, participants had the opportunity to indicate preference for a pseudonym (Dodson, 1998). Participants who did not select a

pseudonym were assigned one. In addition to participant anonymity, I protected site identification by: selecting pseudonyms for each of the three elementary schools, altering data that were identifiable – such as school mascot or school motto - and obscuring data that would likely breach confidentiality. Further precautions involved limiting or precluding the use of any Ohio Department of Education data that might breach the site's anonymity. Research materials (recordings, transcripts, etc.) were maintained in a secure location.

*Trustworthiness features* .Trustworthiness relates to the study's validity (Glesne, 2006). Qualitative research uses verification procedures to control research validity. The goal of valid research is to represent the world as it exists. While this seems simple and straightforward, research validity is challenged by the researcher's involvement in the process (Jackson, 1990). The additional challenge for educational researchers is surpassing the “ordinary” of the educational world; by contrast, Jackson (1990) reminds us “...to explore and even to celebrate the mundane aspects of school life...” (p. 164). Multiple validity procedures were planned to increase trustworthiness including triangulation and peer review.

Triangulation involves the use of various methods and the review of evidence from diverse individuals and settings (Patten, 2005; Maxwell, 2005). Multiple data-collection methods and sources were used from schools broadly representing urban, rural, and suburban settings. This research began with school nominations from the State Support Team, an affiliate of the Ohio Department of Education. District demographics were obtained from the Ohio Department of Education's website. Interviews with multiple SWPBS leaders in each school, site observations, and documents and artifacts

were collected. Comparisons of consumer data, interviews, and observations with theoretical constructs were made to validate this study (Maxwell, 2005).

Dodson (1998) states, “It is my position that social research which aims at gaining knowledge and deepening understanding requires consciousness of a divided society” (p. 245). My interest was in understanding ways to prevent behavior problems in educational settings. My quest for evidence of SWPBS may have lead me to collect data consistent with my belief that positive discipline practices are occurring in schools. I safeguarded against my own subjectivity by journaling before and after site visits. I reviewed my journal for evidence of preconceptions and opinions. Excerpts from the journal appear in Chapter 4.

Both interviews and observations, discussed in the next sections, are attempts to develop “complex forms of recognition...getting close enough to researched communities to become able to see and assess the world from different perspectives within them” (Beech, 2003, p. 865). Each school selected for study was observed for evidence surrounding student behavior and discipline practices. Data related to school climate, resources available to students, and documents (e.g., student handbook) and artifacts were collected.

To increase the study’s trustworthiness I had planned to involve a peer reviewer. An individual trained in qualitative research and not associated with the study was to have examined products, including descriptive and analytic fieldnotes, interviews, and documents/artifacts. As I came to the realization that one’s dissertation committee essentially fulfilled the role of external auditor, the peer review was deliberately eliminated from the study.



### *Data Collection Methods*

Qualitative research methods were used to obtain detailed data that were contextually embedded. Site observations, SWPBS leadership team interviews, and documents and artifacts were primary data sources in this study. ODE demographic information was also collected. The tools used to conduct this study were: Informed Consent forms, interview questions, digital recorder, digital camera, file folders and a notebook/journal. Table 1 represents the research tools and their functions.

Table 1  
*Research Tools and Their Purpose*

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Informed Consent Forms	to obtain each participant's consent
Interviews	to provide semi-structured set of questions
Digital Recorder	to record interviews
Digital Camera	to collect artifacts
Notebook/Journal	to record observations and impressions
File Folders	to collect site documents

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### *Observations*

Participant observation ranges from mostly observation to nearly full participation (Glesne, 2006). For purposes of this project, a structured observation, with minimal participation, of the three school sites was conducted. Observations began with broad sweeps in which one tries to observe and record the broad environment, including the neighborhood. These sweeps included information on the school setting, the participants

in the setting, the events occurring, and the actions of individuals within these events. Ultimately, interaction patterns related to SWPBS were observed.

Specific evidence related to SWPBS was documented by the researcher's digital audio tape (DAT), the researcher's written observations and the researcher's fieldnotes. Observational data pertinent to this inquiry included the following: interactions among students, among staff, and between students and staff; displays of student work; and postings of rules. When feasible, digital photographs documented the evidence in each school setting (e.g., photographs of posted classroom or school rules). Identifiable photographs were not taken of students or of staff.

#### *Documents and Artifacts*

Documents enrich and expand upon information from interviews and observations (Glesne, 2006). While settings and events may be better understood through observation, processes are best clarified through collection of institutional documents. Documents relevant to this inquiry included: student and staff codes of conduct, sample discipline forms, and school discipline data.

Primary documents were obtained from the SWPBS leadership teams in the schools of study. External documents are produced by an agency for a public audience (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). For purposes of this study, these included award certificates, newsletters, and parent handbooks.

Internal documents are produced by an institution for staff use (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). For this research, internal documents included teachers' handbooks, discipline forms, memos and records. No identifiable student data were collected.

Artifacts are items created by students or staff but not conducive to direct collection (Glesne, 2006). Artifacts were collected by observational notes, DAT, and/or digital photography. Use of photography followed Bogdan and Biklen's (1992) adage from Collier, "Photograph first that in which the people in the setting take most pride" (p. 143).

### *Interviews*

Semi-structured interviews of two members of the SWPBS leadership team in each of three sites were conducted. One of the two interviews was with the school administrator, the formal building leader. Another interview was conducted with a member of the SWPBS leadership team, based on nomination by school administrator. These interviews were intended to broaden the understanding of what SWPBS practices were evident and how these supports were being implemented. As an interviewer, I was mindful of my role as a learner. I strove to refine the attributes associated with high-quality interviews: adequate preparation, analysis of the interaction, nondirective inquiry, patient probing, caring demeanor, and gratitude (Glesne, 2006). Interviewing in schools was connected to Bourdieu's "unconscious awareness;" as native in familiar territory I endeavored to be mindful of the experiences (Lenoir, 2006, p. 28).

The interviews were structured using appreciative inquiry. Interview questions were designed to elicit the participant's ideas regarding SWPBS implementation. The interview protocol was constructed to understand the deep habits, values, and beliefs - Pierre Bourdieu's "scientific habitus" (Lenoir, 2006, p.26) - and to assess perceptions of changes in student behavior and changes in system practice resulting from SWPBS. The interview protocol (adapted from Watkins & Mohr, 2001, and from Fraenkel & Wallen,

2006, p. 497) is included in Appendix B). Interviews were designed to be conducted on single, or multiple occasions if needed, in order to extract rich data. On-site data – interviews, observations, documents and artifacts – were collected during the 2007-08 school year.

The aforementioned plan of study was tentative in nature. “Emergent insights may require new selection plans, different kinds of data, and different analytic strategies” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 81). The researcher remained open to opportunities for deeper understanding of the SWPBS leadership perceptions and practices leading to student and system benefits.

### *Data Management*

Specific conventions were used for managing, preserving, organizing, and maintaining data collected during this study. Immediately following each site visit, the data were reviewed, labeled, and stored. Signed consent forms and other identifiable data were kept in a secured location. Notes of the observations were reported under descriptive, analytic, or personal headings in the site fieldnotes.

### *Observations*

For text of observational notes collected during interview, text notation will indicate the date and “wo” for written observation. Text followed by the date and “wi” is an indication of written notes taken from an unrecorded interview (Hamer, 1995). Text information from recollected notes written within the day following observation was indicated by the date followed by “fn” for fieldnotes (Hamer, 1995). These distinctions

are important in understanding the research tools used to collect evidence under a variety of evolving circumstances that characterize school settings.

### *Documents and Artifacts*

A total of 41 documents and 38 artifacts were collected from the three school sites. The labeling of documents and artifacts followed research protocol: identifying information, including date, title of document, source, and significance (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The artifacts and the documents were indexed in the site fieldnotes. All data were secured in a manner consistent with the IRB specifications.

### *Interviews*

Interviews, which had been digitally recorded, were first indexed and then transcribed. Each DAT index was completed to indicate the participant's pseudonym, date and time of interview, site location's pseudonym, relevant demographic data, setting and circumstances, topics, and analytic notes.

Transcriptions of each interview were completed to indicate pseudonym, date and time of interview, site location's pseudonym, relevant demographic data, setting and circumstances, and communication coded by time and interview question. Texts constructed from interviews attempted to precisely preserve the content of each interviewee's commentary. Limitations to text transcriptions are discussed by Hamer (1995), as "necessarily incomplete as to that speaker's style and her or his elaboration of the story. These texts should be read as indicating, not representing, stories and comments made" (p. xiii). Transcription completed from a DAT interview was indicated by date and "ri" for recorded interview (Ives, 1995). The index and the transcription of

each interview were maintained in files with the respective site fieldnotes. Digital recordings were destroyed once the data had been reviewed with committee.

### *Data Analysis*

Data analysis was conducted according to qualitative research standards, including coding of transcripts. (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). Citations of documents and artifacts within the analysis chapters of this study are indicated by the site (A, B, or C), followed by the abbreviation for document or artifact (D or A respectively) with a number signifying its sequence in the study; for example: “A-D-06” indicates that the evidence is from site A and is document number six. Citations of interviews within the analysis chapters of this study are indicated by the participant’s pseudonym followed by the number of the interview question; for example, “Fred, 3” indicates that the participant, Fred, was responding to the third interview question. Researcher’s notations of site observations are indicated by the date followed by “written observation” for written observation or “fieldnotes” for recollected information. Personal journal accounts are indicated by the date and “fieldnotes.”

### *Summary*

What are the key ideas and actions of SWPBS leadership teams that affect positive outcomes? It is imperative that the field of education gain insight from the leaders who are changing school practices in the areas of student behavior and discipline. This appreciative inquiry interpretive collective case study explores the role of school leaders in implementing SWPBS, particularly practices and perceptions. Through data-rich interviews, observations, and documents, the complex interaction of SWPBS leaders on students and system outcomes was studied. The next chapters detail these analyses of data.

## Chapter 4

### Description of Sites

The natural public school settings provided an opportunistic purposive sample to answer the question: In Ohio school systems, what are the perceptions and practices of SWPBS leaders towards discipline? The collective case study methodology, discussed in the previous chapter, resulted in rich data from interviews, observations, documents and artifacts. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 analyze the data through description, within- and between-site analyses, and interpretation.

The most basic level of data analysis is descriptive, that is, reporting what happened (Merriam, 1998). Description is consistent with creating a picture and with taking readers along on the journey (Mertler, 2006). The essence of description is to portray what is going on (Glesne, 2006).

Each elementary school (ES) site - Applefest, Blueberry, and Cherry Hill - is organized as follows: (a) a physical description of neighborhood and elementary building, (b) narratives derived from interviews of the principal and the teacher, (c) observation of SWPBS practice, (d) data from the documents and the artifacts, and (e) personal journal notes. The physical description of setting provides a context for the narratives which follow. Narrative analysis offers access to the participants' stories (Merriam, 1998). "Using cohesive narrative sections, or even stories in their entirety, allows the researcher

to preserve the integrity of the narrative while at the same time offering greater opportunities for understanding” (Mello, 2002, p. 241). The observations of practices and review of the documents and the artifacts add further descriptive information. The personal journal fieldnotes were included to increase the study trustworthiness.

### *Site A: Applefest Elementary School*

#### *Description of the Neighborhood and of the Elementary Building*

In the sunny, sky-blue January morning resplendent with a dusting of snow, the school’s neighborhood was picturesque. Most housing dating back to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century featured modest single family homes with small front stoops, few garages, and driveway-width accommodating a single vehicle. Sidewalks framed the blocks near the elementary building, but most of the residential neighborhood had no sidewalks.

Applefest ES, situated on the corner of the block in the quiet residential area, was insulated from a busy large city artery several blocks to the east. The nicely maintained elementary school, built in the 1960’s, featured favorable architectural and environmental characteristics: wide terrazzo hallways, neutral color scheme and ample natural window lighting, about 2 acres of school grounds with sizeable fenced playground, and a generously-sized and well-lighted gym.

Since school was in session, admission to the single-level elementary building was restricted to the front doorway. The front hall was roped off and a sign directed visitors to register in the office which was to the immediate left of the entryway. Within the office, a poster of the Applefest Elementary rules was just to the right of the principal’s doorway. A video monitor appeared to display internal and external images of



the premises for security purposes. Within moments the principal, Fred, greeted me, showed me his office, and then took me on a building tour (1-16-08, fieldnotes).

Upon returning to Fred's office, I was given an array of documents used to support the positive discipline practices at Applefest ES. Some of the student awards were building specific. The referral form used in discipline was district-wide. Further evidence of SWPBS was obtained at the school's website where monthly Parent Newsletters are posted. Next, Principal Fred, a second-year administrator, discussed his SWPBS perspectives.

### *Narratives*

I was always interested in education, elementary education in particular. I started [my educational career] as a teacher. I had a couple of different principals that I could see as change agents. I thought I can do a lot in my classroom, but I could be a building leader and have even more of an impact than I'm having just in my classroom. I had looked up to some of the principals that I had, even as a youngster, and I thought that would be something that I could really see myself doing.

One thing I noticed coming into this position [as principal] is positive supports. The [previous] principal, who was a very good principal, would often see kids for some of the negative things during the day: for detention or because they got sent down to the office. I had also spent a day over in the dean's office at the high school and I could not believe how many students would come down in droves for tardiness or for not having supplies or for misbehavior or whatever it

was. I thought if I have to do that everyday, I just didn't ever want to see myself in that position. I would be burned out quickly.

That's one thing I really wanted to change. I could see myself getting burned out pretty quickly if there weren't more positives for me or opportunities for me to see the students for doing good things. So, that is one of the things I tried to structure.

The more positives we have in place, the more it really resonates with the staff, students, and parents, too. The parents really appreciated hearing the positives. I wanted to see less detention and suspension – not that there is not a place for that in the school because there is. But I wanted to see more positive incentives for kids and a little more ownership on the students' part on coming up with class rules or school rules. I honestly say that I see more kids for positive things than ever for negative. It's definitely, the scales are turned.

I had one student last month who was brought into my office for making fun of another student with a disability. He was saying some things which were somewhat derogatory and kind of imitating and it was very uncalled for and inappropriate. I thought ... I could give him more than just a detention. I could suspend him, there are so many things that I could have done. But I thought that maybe a different approach would be to show him a little clip on my computer of, it's called the Team Hoyt video. It's about a father and a son. The father cares for someone with Cerebral Palsy. It [video clip] just shows how people overlook differences and how we're all the same in so many ways. It was just a little sensitivity training that I did instead. He [the student] watched this five minute

clip on my computer and we talked about it. I think that [sensitivity training] was more effective than any detention.

The parents expect that their kid is going to come in to the door, have a great day at school; they're going to learn. I think that when you have a positive climate and a positive culture in your building and you have positive supports in place it just resonates with the community. Parents want to send their kids to school, they want them to have a good experience, they want the principal to like their child, and they want the teacher to like their child. So the more positives that we have the less trouble we have... The nicer you are and the more approachable and open your office is, the more that it's a safer environment, it's a safer school. The security, we don't worry about it as much. So I think it just has a positive impact, and positive with the kids, and positive with the parents, and we have a safer school because of it.

I think students will stay on task, more when they have these positive [incentives]. If they know they can earn an incentive or there's a big event at the end of the quarter that they're working their way up to earning. There are certain goals that are non-negotiable. We're not going to take kids out of the instruction. It does take time though to reverse that thinking. Because I will say, that I now have teachers that will keep kids in from recess. I'm actually going to bring this up at the next staff meeting, because we really try not to take recess away. If we move them out of instruction we try to put them in a different place, maybe another classroom, so that they're not just sitting there. It's something that we're

all working toward - trying different things, different avenues, and positive reinforcement - just to keep the students more on task.

I think that when students have ownership in the rules which they've come up with. [They think,] "These are the expectation for our school, and this is what I expect of my peers and my class." I had two kids fighting over a jump rope this week. They were both in here [the office]. We went directly into the Applefest promise and into the rules about, "Did you show self control on the playground? Because according to your peers, you were to do this. And did you do that?" We have a discussion about it and socially we can work things out. It's great to tie it back into a model that the kids have come up with.

You have to have teacher buy in for that [SWPBS]. I remember with the Applefest program, I had this idea in my head of what it was going to look like. I remember at a staff meeting telling my idea. I got a couple looks and I could tell that, "Okay this was going to take more than just me saying this is how we should do it." So we revamped it and I took a lot of their input. And basically facilitated it, I didn't lead so much the meeting; I facilitated and listened to their ideas. They [staff] came up with some great ideas, so they're the ones that have to facilitate the program in the classroom and give it to the students to be in charge of. They had a big stake in it. So [my advice is] getting teachers involved and not making the decision [independently of staff], and letting the teachers come up with it.

I think that you have to have good teachers that really care about the kids. You might have a couple nay-sayers, but you have to ultimately have the majority

of your staff, coming here each day really wanting, not only to teach, but to guide them [students] socially, emotionally.

Every morning the kids will say the Applefest promise over the announcements, so it's really become a part of the culture of the school. My final wish would be that as staff we continue to educate ourselves and learn about other ways to handle behaviors in the classroom.

I'm really happy with where we are. I would like to track some of the behavior referrals with a program called SWIS. That is something that I'd like to look at closer look, to track certain behaviors. So that's something that hopefully we'll start here. I've been very pleased with everything. (Fred, 1-10)

Throughout the guided building tour, discussion of documents and interview, this principal manifested SWPBS ideals. The intermediate general education teacher at Applefest ES, Lisa, was similarly positive about her profession and her experiences with SWPBS. Her excerpt follows:

I just loved school as an elementary student. I always had good rapport with my teachers; I always looked up to them and admired them. I wanted to emulate that and to have the opportunity to make a difference. I've always wanted to learn and to pass that on.

At Applefest, the teachers want to recognize the positive [student behavior] and good choices rather than focusing on the negative. I think we feel like we're all here to help and support each other. It's not, "Well this kid's a discipline problem I'm just going to send him to the office."

As for school safety and security - especially the playground and the bus and all that - I think the students kind of felt like they had a say in the creation of the rules. With that in mind, since they had a say, I think that makes them feel a little more accountable.

Oh, there are so many things about our school that are so good, but one of the things that stands out in my mind is, I think the overall moral of the staff is just incredible. I think that handling behavior in a positive way creates an overall positive atmosphere and then the positive atmosphere is automatically going to reduce the discipline. The teachers can put their energy into the academics as opposed to the discipline of the students. Because the students are more comfortable, they have more respect for a teacher. It keeps a positive atmosphere going and then you're not battling attitudes.

What I see is just them following other students' examples. Because some students, I mean let's face it, they just come from homes and backgrounds when you say, "treat people with respect," they really don't know what that means, I don't think. We just say, "you need to show self control, you need to show good listening skills, you need to be cooperative." Well, they don't know what that means. They don't know what it looks like. So with positive behavior supports and when they see other students praised and rewarded, so to speak, some, not all, but some tend to follow suit.

About three or four weeks ago, I had two students who sit in close proximity in the classroom, and apparently there was some kicking under the desk and a little sly name calling that I wasn't aware of. But, of course, during indoor

recess, it kind of blew up and they got in trouble with the recess supervisor because they had carried it to that next level. What I did to keep the situation from escalating was, or before I blamed either one or corrected either one or gave any type of consequence, I just pulled each of them out individually to let them tell me their side of the story. Before they started [explaining] I just said, “I’m not angry with you, I just want to know what happened.” I got each student’s version of the story and then I pulled them together and we talked about how problems can escalate if you don’t try to take care of them right away.

We talked about how each of them had the opportunity to put a stop to that by seeking out the help of an adult if they could no longer handle it, or something. They both identified to me where they could have done something differently. They could have made a different choice and then the situation wouldn’t have gotten to the point that it did. They responded favorably to that because they didn’t feel backed into a corner. I gave each of them the opportunity to explain. They talked about it and they each admitted their part of causing the problem. We talked about it and then I asked them later that day, “Are you guys okay, is everything okay because we have a whole half of a school year yet to go.” We can’t start building, what do I want to say, harboring bad feelings toward one another. They apologized to each other. Typically what’s funny about that is that they normally work very well together in a group. Maybe that particular day they were just getting on each other’s nerves.

I think that, for the most part, the teachers in this building like what we do, we have the kids’ best interest in mind, and that’s what drives us. The building

leadership - you can't help but make a point to understand that the building leadership has a lot to do with the staff morale.

No matter what system you have or what idea or plan you come up with, there's going to be some things in it that need to be ironed out. The only thing that comes to mind is to be patient. It's not all going to fall into place at once (Lisa, 1-10).

### *Observation of SWPBS Practice*

Fred gave a guided tour of the primary wing, the specials wing, and the intermediate wing at Applefest ES. The main hall contained a large bulletin board on positive behavior (A-A-19). In each classroom, as in the main office, the Applefest Promise and the CORE poster were displayed. Student work was displayed along hallways (A-A-20, 21, 22). In some classrooms when doors were open we stepped in briefly to observe. Fred pointed out the special education units, the reading room, the computer lab, the ESL speech room, the school psychologist/nurse/counselor room (with conference table), the teachers' lounge, the kindergarten classrooms (full day kindergarten), the gym/auditorium/cafeteria, the art room, and the music area (on stage). Virtually every room was in active instructional use (1-16-08, written observation).

During our tour, few people spoke to Fred. In fact, most teachers and students seemed only peripherally aware of our presence in their classrooms. Fred explained that he visits each classroom at least once a day and staff is accustomed to him (1-16-08, written observation). This observation and the interview commentary were consistent with faculty agenda information (A-D-06).



In one classroom, Fred showed me the State Commendations which he had framed and given to each teacher as a form of recognition of his/her efforts. He also had given each teacher a signed “Yes You Can” poster. It appeared that each teacher had given these items places of prominent location in his/her classroom (1-16-08, written observation).

### *Documents and Artifacts*

*ODE data.* Applefest ES is located in an urban district of low medium income and high poverty (ODE Typology Data, 2008). These districts are characterized by high population density. Statewide approximate ADM = 290,000. There are 102 such districts in Ohio.

In the past 5 year<sup>2</sup>, the Applefest ES Building Report Card has improved from “Continuous Improvement” to the highest rating, “Excellent.”

*District data.* The principal at Applefest Elementary contributed 17 SWPBS documents for review. Three of these 17 documents were for internal use, consisting of (a) a staff memorandum explaining how classes could develop a behavior matrix (A-D-05), and (b) the Applefest CAN DO slips (A-D-08), given by staff to students who make positive choices, accumulate toward quarterly whole-school incentives, and (c) the August Faculty Meeting agenda (A-D-06) featuring the principal walk-through, the principal’s incentive, Applefest ES behavior matrix, and the building’s discipline procedures.

The principal walk-through was intended to “observe student learning and to establish a rapport with the students” (A-D-06). The principal’s incentive was a special

recognition meriting a trip to the office, a token reward, a special certificate to be taken home, and the student's name announced to the school. The behavior matrix was a building-wide interpretation of four valued behaviors (1-16-08, informal interview).

The discipline section of the August faculty agenda indicated classroom rules are developed with student input under the teacher's direction. Classroom rules are to be posted. Office referrals are "a last resort" (A-D-06) and require completion of the District Referral Form (1-16-08, informal interview).

The remaining 15 documents were intended for external communication. The Applefest Promise (A-D-01) was a behavior worksheet in which a student lists inappropriate actions and future plans. This form is then taken home for parent signature.

The district's Office Referral Form (A-D-02) delineated situational aspects of the referral including date, time, location, referring staff, and others involved in the incident. Problem behavior and possible motivation are indicated. An administrative decision is a listing of corrective consequences. This form is then sent home for parent signature.

The Applefest Elementary Detention Form (A-D-03) indicated the reason for detention, description of incident, and when detention is scheduled. This form is sent home for parent signature.

In contrast to the referral and detention forms, most documents reflected efforts to promote and support positive behavior. The Applefest School Award certificate (A-D-04) is issued to students who exemplify one or more of the positive school behaviors. This certificate is sent home.

The 17-page Applefest ES Parent Handbook (A-D-07) contained two paragraphs related to "behavior" and "bus discipline." The handbook specified that students are

responsible for following classroom rules, adult directives, and the instructions of safety patrol members.

The Applefest ES website home page (A-D-09) included a prominent “welcome,” and overview of high academic standards, community spirit, and positive difference that characterized the elementary. Staff Directory (A-D-10) was easily accessed from Applefest ES home page menu. Another home page link was to Applefest ES 2006-2007 School Year Report Card (A-D-11), and Ohio Department of Education reporting of the school’s performance relative to 30 indicators; Applefest was designated “Excellent.” Another tab on the home page accessed the building’s School Improvement Plan 2007-2008 (A-D-12).

Links from Applefest home page accessed newsletters (A-D-13, 14, 15, 16, 17) featuring news on district-wide behavior model, counselor’s notes, and the behavior matrix. The Applefest Promise was printed in each newsletter issue.

The Applefest behavior matrix (A-D-18) was a table with school locations as column headings and with key behaviors as row headings. The cells of the table included specific behaviors for each school setting. For example, Self-Control in the Cafeteria is shown by “using an inside voice.”

### *Personal Journal Fieldnotes*

Prior to my research visit at Site A: Applefest ES, the following notes were recorded in my personal journal:

The early morning of my scheduled research appointment with personnel at Site A is spent checking that research forms, interview protocol, recorder, and camera are ready and packed. I feel a nervous excitement. I am aware of many

details to keep in mind, but first and foremost the focus of the research:

understanding the perceptions and practices of those actually using SWPBS in Ohio schools. Before driving to the first site, I'm re-checking my directions and calculated my ETA [estimated time of arrival] (1-16-08, personal fieldnotes).

Immediately following the visit at Site A: Applefest ES, the following notes were recorded in my personal journal:

My organization paid off! Following the principal's tour [of Applefest ES] I was permitted to walk unescorted through the building to photograph evidence, I caught a momentary reflected glimpse of myself in a glass door – smiling (1-16-08, personal fieldnotes).

### *Site B: Blueberry Elementary School*

#### *Description of the Neighborhood and the Elementary Building*

Despite a near zero wind chill, no school closings or delays were being reported. A winter storm warning had already been posted for the following day. After a lengthy drive in darkness, I arrived at the highway exit indicated on MapQuest and recommended by the principal. The city had grown since I'd last been through, now evidencing more industrial and commercial development in an area that had been agricultural 5 to 10 years ago. I found the elementary campus several blocks from the downtown amid a mixed zoning area of residential, commercial, and light industrial properties.

At 7:40, parking spots near the school were already filled. Parking was obtained on a side street near the two-story 1940's-era Blueberry ES building. In the brisk morning air I walked past two exterior doors with signs directing me to enter through the front

door. The front door was unlocked and the entry hall lighted. Stepping in from the chill, I was instantly enveloped in the warmth of the heated interior. Walking through the short entry hall, looking left and right at the intersecting hallway, the “Office” sign was prominent.

Just as I greeted the principal another woman approached and I was introduced to the teacher I’d be interviewing. After clarifying that it would be preferable to interview the principal and teacher separately, the teacher escorted me to a small room off the main hall. After a few moments of talk and obtaining consent, the interview was initiated (1-31-08, written observation). The interview with Julia, a primary general education teacher, follows:

### *Narratives*

I [Julia speaking] think what attracted me [to teaching] was my mom was a teacher and I always helped her. I had some great teachers throughout my life. It [teaching] just seemed the natural thing to do and it’s something that I always enjoy doing. I got lots of opportunities in high school and such to exercise those abilities. I had a lot of people invest their time with me. So many kids now need to know that there is a stable person that is going to care about them... [With SWPBS] we all have the same language.

We believe in being safe and we, that’s part of our big matrix. We look at every area and explain to the students what it means to be safe in every area. Because that’s really become a big issue lately, whether it be with bullies or with people coming in and out of the buildings.

Because it is positive in the kind of interactions we have with students, there's more time for academic learning. Teachers are not spending that kind of time on behavior. Because we cut down on a lot of that because we pre-teach [behavior skills], I think there's more student time spent learning.

What we expect allows them to learn the proper social skills and the positive aspect. Anytime you can teach anything positive it's going to have a positive effect on the students. I think learning these, the social skills, are built into our beliefs, 'being safe, being kind, be respectful, be your best.'

Well, yesterday. I was in the hallway coming down after I took my children to special [class, e.g. art, music or physical education] and there was a little boy in the hallway and there was a drinking fountain down by the office. I didn't know his name. He was playing in the water fountain. I asked him, I said, "What are you doing?" "I'm filling up my water bottle." "Really? It appears to me that you're playing." I said, "Are you playing?" "Yes." I said, "What should you be doing right now?" "Uh, I should be going back to my classroom." "That's right, because what do we believe here at Blueberry, why are you here?" "I'm here to learn." "That's right." I followed him back to his classroom and was able to share with the classroom teacher. He still had to move his clothes pin [behavior consequence] in the classroom, but there's that interaction. I didn't know this child's name, but he could still tell me why he was here and what we believe at Blueberry. So I can come in and say, "the boy that I just sent to you, he wasn't using his time well, he wasn't being his best." And I could explain to the teacher in a matter of a few short sentences what was happening, instead of telling her,

“Well so-and-so he...,” you know exactly what he was doing. I didn’t have to get upset with the child because he already knew; he could tell me what we believed.

We look at the data. This last nine weeks our statistics showed that we had some issue with physical aggression. So we’ve addressed that with our guidance counselor and he’s running an anger management group. With the system that we have we record our forms through SWIS and that gives us good reports and statistics. We can look at that [SWIS data] as a SWPBS committee every month and say, ‘Well, where are our issues? What do we need to address?’

She [the principal] wouldn’t like me to say this, but I really think a lot of the good things we have going on here are because of her personality. Because of her leadership, she brings ideas to us. The staff is very unique that if she’s got an idea we usually say, “Well sure let’s run with it.” We embrace [ideas] and we try lots of new things. We see what works.

It’s very worth the time and the effort. Training isn’t a big deal. You get a lot of great information, a lot of good contacts. It does take buy-in from the staff. That [buy-in] was probably the biggest thing that we were kind of holding our breath about. What would the staff say? There were four of us who were really pumped about SWPBS [after] coming back from a conference. Anytime you really want to change something, you’ve really got to get some good buy-in. School-wide positive behavior support gave us tools to help with that buy-in.

It [SWPBS] does take buy-in from the staff and that was probably the biggest thing that we were kind of holding our breath about. What would the staff say? ... We’ve had to talk about beliefs. We had to talk about what we expected in

every area of the building. And then we did the outside of the classroom, and we had to come up with forms together. We had to come up with a positive way which we use for our Berry-bucks. And we had to decide that as a building. We did that [SWPBS program in the building] for a year or so and then got it in the classroom. It really changed our atmosphere.

I think we were kind of labeled the school that makes differences. We're going to help kids whether it is behavior or academics. But as a building we believe that we are going to do what's best for kids. If that means coming in at eight-fifteen and figuring changes out, we're going to do it. (Julia, 1-10)

Following the interview, Julia shared two notebooks containing SWPBS records of meetings and data on progress. I looked through sections as she explained the processes. Julia offered to get copies of the documents that she considered most significant, then left the room for a few moments to retrieve them. Upon returning, Julia explained the significance of each. The sounds of students entering the building alerted me to the passage of time. I thanked Julia for her time noting it was probably time she needed to get to her classroom. No, she assured me, she had a student teacher who would cover the arrival of her students. Julia led me to the principal's office for the next interview (1-31-08, informal interview).

The interview with the principal Karen was held in her office.

Children [reason for entering education profession]. I wanted to make a difference with children. They are full of energy and full of life and I just wanted to be a part of that.



There was a matter of searching for things that we needed. That, doing the research and trying to find out what was best for kids. Because some of the things that I saw as a classroom teacher, why don't we just say that I didn't agree with. I thought that there were better ways of doing things.

For me [an example of effective discipline practice] it is when children stop each other. First graders were misbehaving in the bathroom. There was an adult walking by, but it was the child that said, "That that's not what we expect." Those were the words that he used, "That's not what we expect." I followed up with it and with both the children. One [child] told the other child, "You know what you need to come in here and do. That's what we expect." But with the child that stopped the other child, I just praised because he took it upon himself. He [the student] knew exactly what to do and then had the courage to talk to that other child. I think that's fantastic.

It is a lot of re-teaching; I think that is what we like about this program. We teach everything else and yet behavior is something that we've never taught before, directly taught, I should say. It's always been a part of education. But now we have assemblies and we talk about what our expectations. We follow up in small groups and we have discussion in our classrooms. So it [SWPBS] is a part of our curriculum. I think because of that, the students are taking it upon themselves to interact and to follow through.

I think the students feel safer. Our beliefs are being safe, kind, and respectful and our best. The first thing is safety. Anytime we have an interaction where we need to re-teach, that's what we say. "Were you being safe? Is that a

safe thing to do?” We even talk about, in our assemblies, being safe going home and safe on the playground. I think it’s just brought it into the forefront. We’ve never had any issues with gangs or safety or anything like that.

If you walk the hallways, or when you walk the hallways, what I’ve been told is that you can sense just this belonging- that everybody feels as though they belong. I mean, I’ve been told that by outsiders when they walk through, they can feel it.

Well we truly believe, every staff member believes, that academics and behavior go hand and hand. If we focus in on the behavior aspect, academics increase. If you want to look at an arbitrary number, our test scores are going up. We are seeing some benefits in just that one test. I’m not going to put over all my eggs in one basket, but I think more learning is going on academically. I mean there are things that we’ve done academically, but behavioral [changes] adds to that. You can’t pull it apart.

I think it’s [SWPBS’s] given them [students] a language. They have that common language where they can talk to each other. Going back to the incident in the bathroom, and it’s the expectations or beliefs, and so it’s a starting point there. Part of our SWPBS system is we look at why children do the things that they do. So if they’re not meeting our expectation is it because they just don’t know how to socialize. They want that peer attention and they need us to help them. So we have social groups, we teach social skills. We teach them what they need to do. We do it individually; we do it in groups, small groups. We do it in whole groups. Both the atmosphere and what we’re teaching increase social skills.

The important part [of SWPBS process] is talking. Talking first among staff members to see what expectations are. ‘What do we believe? What do we want?’ Take it slow. Do a lot of talking. Some people want the document, they want that referral form. They want that reward system. They want something. That’s not the important part; the important part is talking.

I think that this building is made up of individuals that care about kids, care about their jobs, care about the community, and really will do anything in their power to make it happen. I think that’s where we start. It’s the talking and communication that we give to one another and to the community, I think, that makes it grow. It’s our values. It’s who we are as a collective whole. It’s the synergy of all of us coming together.

It seems to be, PBS, when I think of PBS, it’s abstract. It’s difficult for individuals to know where to start. There are a lot of good forms out there and there are a lot of good resources. I think it’s the process that people need to concentrate upon. It works. It absolutely works! (Karen, 1-10)

### *Observation of SWPBS Practice*

At the conclusion of the interviews, the principal indicated that she was scheduled at another meeting. Karen introduced me to her secretary, obtained a visitor’s pass for me, and then invited me to tour the building on my own. I proceeded to tour the building, taking pictures as I went (1-31-08, written observation).

There was abundant evidence of SWPBS practice in the building including the Blueberry ES Mission Statement and Beliefs (B-A-14) posted throughout the building. The Rights and Responsibilities (B-A-15) were posted throughout building. The Ridicule

Free Zone posters (B-A-17) placed strategically in restrooms and stairwells. The Behavior Charts (B-A-19) were posted in the halls. The Building Goals (B-A-20) stating priorities placed in main hall and the Behavior/settings matrix (B-A-21) posted in upper hall detail behaviors expected in school settings. The U-Matter poster (B-A-23) was posted in upper hall. In the art room the classroom rules were posted (B-A-24). The main hall contained the Wall of Inspiration (B-A-26, 27) featuring positive messages and images, the building beliefs (B-A-27), the poster of What to do if Wrong (B-A-28), and several examples of students' academic mastery (B-A-29, 30). The above evidence was photographed during the January 2008 site visit (1-31-08, written observation).

During my self-guided tour of Blueberry ES, I reencountered Julia in her classroom at the building's upper level. Seeing no students in her room, I stepped in and asked her if there was any PBS evidence I might photograph. On closer examination, I realized I'd already photographed artifacts comparable to what was in Julia's classroom. As we were talking, Julia's students, slightly breathless and carrying water bottles, began to enter the room. I surmised they may be returning from physical education class. I quickly excused myself noting I did not want to interrupt. Julia reassured me that the "students know what to do" and that her student teacher was in charge. I observed from the side of the classroom as the students entered quickly and quietly, some smiling to see another adult in their classroom but all returning to their seats in a calm orderly fashion. Academic instruction followed this transition from physical education (1-31-08, written observation and informal interview).

### *Documents and Artifacts*

*ODE data.* Blueberry ES is located in a rural/agricultural district characterized by small student population, low poverty, and low to moderate median income (ODE Typology Data, 2008). Statewide approximate total ADM = 220,000. There are 161 such districts in Ohio.

In the past 5 years, the Blueberry ES Building Report Card has improved from “Continuous Improvement” to the highest rating, “Excellent.”

*Site data.* Five documents were received from the teacher, Julia. Two documents were for internal communication, BerryBucks (B-D-08) rewards coupons issued to students and the Office Referral Form (B-D-10) delineating problem behavior, possible motivation and consequence.

The remaining documents were for external communication. The Discipline Handbook (B-D-11) explained student behavioral expectations, PBS, prevention philosophy, procedures, interventions, incentives, and discipline levels. Blueberry ES SWPBS Newsletters (B-D-12, 13) reported progress on SWPBS goals to parents. The quarterly newsletter defined and gave resources regarding a problem behavior, accounted discipline referrals for the quarter (school location of problem and reasons for referrals), and reported on classroom success on monthly behavior and academic goals for the quarter (1-31-08, informal interview).

Additional documents were available from Blueberry ES website. The homepage (B-D-01) welcomed readers to the website and contained links to additional information. One link was the faculty and staff directory (B-D-02). Newsletters were available on the

website (B-D-03, 04, 05, 06, 07, and 08). An early fall newsletter had a section entitled, “Ask Your Child,” encouraging parents to discuss topics, including learning and behavior, responsibility, respect, and kindness, with their children.

### *Personal Journal Fieldnotes*

Prior to my research visit at Site B: Blueberry ES, the following notes were recorded in my personal journal:

I packed research materials last evening before the scheduled site visit, remembering to get organized and travel lightly. In calculating planned arrival time and travel time, I realized it would necessitate an even earlier morning start than I’d imagined. Weather had been a factor in school closings and delays already this week, and a bigger storm was forecast in a few days. I felt a momentary sense of nervousness that weather might derail research plans.

I arose early and first checked weather conditions; despite a near zero wind chill, no school closings or delays were being reported, but winter storm warnings had been posted for the following day. Whew; I experienced a sense of relief. As for travelling lightly, I realized the wind chill would necessitate arriving with scarf, gloves, coat and not simply the research materials I had taken to the last site.

Driving to the site at planned departure time brought back the feeling of eager anticipation I had experience travelling to Site A. The principal at Site B had been friendly on the phone call when scheduling the appointment; further, she had emailed detailed directions clarifying how to find the school building and where to park.

Within the first 10 minutes of the drive, the ‘Low Tire Pressure’ light came on. “Hmmm,” I thought, “what to do?” I mentally reviewed my options: call and reschedule, go home and coordinate with family member to use another vehicle, stop and get air, or just drive. I drove on feeling slightly apprehensive [due to car’s warning light] (1-31-08, personal fieldnotes).

An excerpt of my personal journal notes recalled the visit to Blueberry ES: I left most of my belongings in her office. Taking camera and notepad I headed upstairs. On my way I immediately captured evidence of SWPBS, including on the stairwell. I proceeded along the hall to the far end stairwell and downstairs to a lower art room. Finally, I combed the main floor for evidence.

This was a great site visit. I collected a lot of artifacts. I attended to the low tire pressure after the visit (1-31-08, personal fieldnotes).

### *Site C: Cherry Hill Elementary School*

#### *Description of the Neighborhood and the Elementary Building*

The mid-February day dawned with a sub-zero wind-chill amid partly cloudy sky. I arrived at the 1920’s elementary two-story building located in the changing landscape of rural Ohio. The prominent view from the elementary school site was farmland with a grain elevator in the distance, yet two housing developments were also in sight.

The parking lot in front of the building was full so I located a space in an adjacent lot. The door closest to the parking lot was locked; the next doorway I located was the main entry. Once inside, I greeted a staff member who was arranging a bulletin board. Just over her shoulder I could see the school’s main office. The secretary indicated the

principal was expecting me, a relief to hear since this site visit had been postponed once due to weather conditions.

I met the principal, Jim, who ushered me to his office. He has been an administrator for nearly 10 years, having implemented PBS 3 years ago (2-19-08, written observation and informal interview).

### *Narratives*

[Jim speaking] I just love helping people, especially kids. I want to do this [be an educator]. I want to make a positive difference in society and to help kids through teaching. I have never looked back. I've always been excited. We're still in the business to help kids and families with learning. I think what excited me then and still does now.

Our test scores had come in over the summer [several years ago]. We weren't where I thought we should be for the quality of teacher and kids that we have here. Coming off of a 300-and-some behavior referral year it just kind of just hit me, I think we ought to try this [SWPBS].

Oh boy. I don't know if this is newsworthy or not, but the last student that I dealt with, I dealt with a first grade student who actually lied. She came up to talk to me. As we frame all of our discipline referrals, we talk about the action of the child, not the child himself, and the choice. All choices have consequences. Most of our choices having good consequences, but some of them have negative or bad consequences. Our decisions not only affect us but how many people can be affected by our good and bad decisions? In that case I basically, we always look right up at the building blocks and I just simply asked her, "Which of the



expectations do you feel you did not follow?” She immediately said “I wasn’t being responsible.” I said “How were you not being responsible?” and had her tell me. “What should you have done? What was the responsible thing to do?” We talked about “Okay, you made a choice to do something not being responsible. How many people did that affect?” We talked about the fact that the cafeteria worker had to stop what she was doing because she thought this girl was highly allergic to peanuts and she was trying to serve her a peanut butter sandwich. The girl didn’t want the peanut butter sandwich because she was out of money and already charged her maximum. Instead of getting a peanut butter sandwich, she tried to divert and get a lunch deceitfully, even though she was not following the rules. That person [the lunch worker] had to go get the teacher out of her lunch and then she was concerned; “Oh, my gosh I didn’t know she was allergic to peanuts!” We had to call mom at work. Then her mom had to get off [work] which interrupted everybody in her place of business. It interrupted me. All of a sudden I can see her understanding that you’re impacting an awful lot of people with one little tiny lie.

I always try to get the kids to understand their impact on others, their decisions, and the consequences. I tie it back to what is the responsible thing, what’s the respectful thing. I just tie it back to that [respect and responsibility] and get them [student] to tell us what they did or what they should have done. I always keep it at that level. It’s the choice, not the child.

“I’m not mad at you. I’m not upset with you. I’m more disappointed with your choice.” I think that’s a very effective way of dealing with it.

It's not how I did it when I started. It used to be 'everything-that's-wrong' kind of deal. This [SWPBS] has helped shift it back a little bit to making the kids tell us what they should have done, why they should have done it, and how it not only affects them but everybody around them.

Discipline is, in my opinion, is the teaching. It's not only the teaching of what we expect but also the teaching from learning. I think that's what discipline is. Discipline in my opinion should be learning: taking your mistake, learning from it, and applying it so that it doesn't occur again.

You have kids who are following the expectations so they are less likely to cause accidents, or do something that could hurt somebody. Throwing something across the room and you might injure somebody. Those kinds of things have come way down in these last couple years.

Academic learning, our reading scores have gone up every year for the last 2 years that this has implemented, actually going on our third. In our initial DIBELS [Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy] results are looking positive and our Iowa [Iowa Test of Basic Skills] and CogAT [Cognitive Abilities Test] scores look awesome.

I will tell you having 300+ referrals 3 years ago, the amount of time we have to buzz into classrooms. Our thought is we like to see students during recess time - we've got a lot of referrals and just a few recess times that are only 20 minutes long - but the day isn't perfect and it doesn't always work out that way. I hope for the teachers [SWPBS has improved] the academic time, I've really tried to focus on not interrupting the class.

On the social side, social skills, I know our guidance counselor also utilizes this [SWPBS] and if we see any trend [from SWIS data] or anything then she's right on that with her lessons. She goes into every classroom and does lesson each week. There can be a focus - if all of a sudden we're trending something in the disrespect, or aggression or inappropriate language - then she can try to focus on those kinds of needs. So I think that's helped. I think our kids overall are a lot better together, I mean just getting along. It's not perfect, you don't ever find that, but it is a lot better.

The patience and the commitment just kind of keep coming back to me that it's [implementing SWPBS] a slow process. It's one that evolves. Well I'll tell you it's going to take all the time of working with staff because it's a staff driven initiative. For this plan [SWPBS] to happen you have to get everybody involved and that's where the time is. You've got to have staff meetings. It isn't something you can put in [place] in a month. We had to start from the bottom: 'What does this mean to us? What do we want to see? What are our rules?'

You've got to be very patient in allowing this [SWPBS] to form and to develop with your staff. You see, you don't know how well a program is doing until about the end of the third year. The more that you're able to get staff participating and involved in the process, the better the buy in will be. A lot of times people just say you've got to get buy in; my experience in this position is you get that by the participation.

Commitment is huge. I don't know that it's just my staff, but I think a lot in education will rush out and do some things, some new program, some grant,

something and you do it for a year or two and then it's gone and you're on to the next program. The biggest selling thing for me to my staff is 'this isn't going anywhere' [SWPBS is viewed as a permanent change] -so you have to be committed that when you start this, no matter how it's going, we're going to keep going and we're going to keep massaging it and getting it to where it works for our building.

The nicest thing about this [SWPBS] is it's not really a canned program. Every building is going to be different. It's more of a philosophy. We've got to have that shared philosophy. What are we trying to do here? Are we trying to build kids up and encourage them to do the right thing and then praise that or do we want to just catch them doing everything wrong and criticize them for it and then punish them. It's just a philosophy. Getting your staff into that philosophy is probably a key component of it too. You have to have that shared positive behavior thought that 'what do we want to accentuate and highlight here.'

The sense of community is a broad phrase but that's what I've experienced here. It's the caring and compassion. It's a part of our mission statement that we provide what we do in a caring and progressive environment. Service learning is huge all the way through the high school. A need is a need. It isn't just one school or one building. It's our whole K-12 faculty, student body and families that dive in and do this at all levels.

Our community culture here is that we want excellence. We want excellence in academics, we want excellence in athletics, we want it in arts, and

we want it in relationships. That's something that I think we have very special here.

I wouldn't go anyplace else. I purposefully moved into this district after being hired here for that very reason. I wanted my kids to go here regardless of where I ended up being employed. When you have something special like that and then you foster it and you guard it. I think that's what this community here wants. This program I think feeds into that because we expect our kids to be respectful and to be responsible and be safe and be a problem-solver. You can go around to a lot of schools, I don't know how many of them have be a problem-solver. And that's the biggest part is that it grows into the culture here. My wishes are to continue the caring and compassionate. The doing what it takes to be the best.

(Jim, 1-10)

The interview of the intermediate general education teacher, Kathy, follows:

For me I had a second grade teacher that just, I loved the year. It was exciting all the time. She brought a real joy to it. From that point on, that's all I ever wanted to do, was to be in the classroom. So it just, I've never considered anything else except for education. I wanted to have an impact on students as she had on my life.

My first year was very eye opening. When I came into it I thought everybody came from the same kind of household I had come from, that everybody's parents checked their homework and that everybody's parents asked them at the end of the day how their school was and read with them and went to their school programs and sat down together at the dinner table and talked. I

quickly came to realize that that's not how everybody's life is. So it was quite an eye opener for me. But I seem to, I feel like those are the kids that I have more of a connection with are the ones that don't come from what I came from. I guess I feel like they're the ones that I got into it for.

It [SWPBS] was definitely a vision that Jim had for the building and then the rest of us were kind of along for the ride at first and then began to see the same vision. As we went through the training we began to realize that this could really work here.

I will have to say that I've had a very easy year in terms of discipline with my class this year. One thing that comes to mind is I have a student who has some anger issues with some other students at times. He's not very tolerant of others. He's a student with a disability. He just struggles with the correct social aspects of dealing with others when he doesn't feel he wants to deal with them. We had a situation where a student, another student was just trying to be pleasant and polite to him and helping him out. Well it's not what he wanted and he lashed out. It was just more of a one-on-one with him about discussing what was appropriate, how should he have handled that better, helping him to see. We met with the other student that was trying to help him and had that child express to this little boy why he did what he did. That he did not mean anything out of malice. He really just cared and was trying to be polite and pleasant. So we kind of just had a round table discussion with him about, more as a teachable moment for the social skills of this particular student needs to learn. It was also good for the other child to see that you're going to encounter this now and again in life and you need to know

how to, if somebody doesn't respond appropriately to you, even though you were doing a good thing, this is what you still need to do for them.

As being part of the core team that first year, it was very time consuming. We met together as a team in our building once a month as well as then having our outside meetings and trainings. So that was very time consuming. By the end of the year it was getting very tiresome for all of us. We hadn't yet seen a lot of the successes yet. So by the end of the year there was that discouragement of man we are putting in so much time and effort and we're not seeing it. But now three years into it, our time is not near what it was. We're seeing the results in data of it working

The staff is on board. They've come around. They're seeing the improvements. They're seeing the data. They're seeing the changes. So that has been tremendous.

That [safety] has been great because with that consistency, the kids know that as they're walking down the hall somebody is noticing them. Oh, that's [academic learning] much more improved. We're not dealing with as many behavior issues. I'm not dealing in my classroom with nearly as many behavior issues. They're not being pulled out and coming into the office. We do not have to stop our academic time to deal with an issue. I don't want to say that it never happens, but it's not happening as often.

I think this [social skills] has really increased because we've really hit on the being respectful as being one of our core building blocks. They're learning what that means, what that looks like to be respectful to one another, to their

peers, to their teachers, to other adults that might be in the classroom or in the building. So in terms of their social skills, I've seen a lot of growth with our kids in that regard. Being more polite, being more tolerant, being more respectful overall. So in terms of all three of those areas, I've really seen the PBS be very effective for our building.

Be realistic [regarding implementing SWPBS]. I don't want to say, don't set your expectations too high, but know your staff. You have to go about it [SWPBS] the right way. It really takes a lot of planning. It really takes the core team to really have to talk it through and have our own little internal battles with one another on a safe playing field and come together united before you can go to the whole staff.

We had our core ideas and we took them to the staff. We had discussions with them at staff meetings and got their feedback. That's when we came to realize we had to compromise. We went to them with our compromises. I think that is when we got so much more buy in from them because they saw we were willing and we weren't dictating this is our program. They saw that we were really listening to what they were wanting and their concerns and their ideas. That's when the dialogue really began among the staff.

I would just reiterate that initial year was challenging. Our core team was very committed to the program. We were committed to making the changes for our building and that was key. The core group needs to be strong in that area. Go in with your eyes wide open. From this vantage point it has been, yes, it has been very worthwhile.



I think the core factor is just the sense of community that we have in this district. Our community does very much have high expectations for us {Cherry Hill}. Those four things [core values] are things that when they leave our building they'll be going out into society. Society expects people to be respectful and to be problem-solvers and to be safe and to be responsible. And having this PBS as we already talked in one of the other questions about how it has contributed positively to our school safety and security and our academics and the social skills. That all goes in line with what our community is wanting when they are in this building. They see those things and that just feeds on the expectations of what they already have of the excellence (Kathy, 1-10).

#### *Observation of SWPBS Practice*

The principal conducted a tour of Cherry Hill ES building. The framed rule poster (C-A-11, C-D-09) was displayed throughout the school, including in restrooms, cafeteria, hallways, and outdoor playground. From one spot in a hall, I counted 5 visible posters. The principal told me the posters were reduced in size and magnetized and mounted in school busses (2-19-08, written observation & informal interview).

Jim also pointed out other displays in the main hall including a bulletin board depicting an upcoming author visit. The principal and I stepped aside as a class passed us and headed upstairs. The students, looking clammy as if coming from physical education class, walked quietly in a single line. The principal remarked to the teacher that he appreciated how quiet the students were and said he'd issue the class a coupon. Commenting to me that he usually wore a lanyard with reward coupons, Jim returned to

the office to write up the class coupon (2-19-08, written observation & informal interview).

### *Documents and Artifacts*

*ODE data.* Cherry Hill ES is located in a rural/small town district of moderate to high median income (ODE Typology Data, 2008). The poverty percentage is below average. Statewide approximate ADM = 130,000. There are 81 such districts in Ohio.

In the past 5 years, the Cherry Hill ES Building Report Card has improved from “Continuous Improvement” to the second highest rating, “Effective.”

*Site data.* Ten documents were received from the principal, Jim. All of the documents appeared to be for internal communication. The Cherry Hill ES Behavior Expectation Matrix (C-D-01) describes the student behavior expected in various school settings. The Office Discipline Referral Form (C-D-02) contained referral information on time, date, location, others involved, issue of concern, possible motivation, what happened, and consequences. A flowchart entitled “Dealing with Problem Behavior” (C-D-03) detailed teacher responses to observed behavior concern. Teaching Expectations (C-D-04) was a list of suggested activities to assist students in learning appropriate behaviors. The Cherry Hill Expectations (C-D-05) was a teaching guide for key building behavioral expectations. Behavior Classifications (C-D-06) and Expectations Bingo (C-D-07) were student games to enhance understanding of expectations. A Caught-Being-Good ticket (C-D-08) is issued by any staff member to a student or to a whole class exhibiting appropriate behavior. Cherry Hill Branches (C-D-09) was the poster itemizing the four central expectations. School-wide Information System (SWIS) data packet (C-D-

10) contained multi-year graphs demonstrating significant reduction in discipline referrals over three-year period, reduction in all types of problem behavior, reduction in behavior referrals by school location, and reduction in suspension/expulsion (2-19-08, informal interview).

The Cherry Hill ES website home page (C-D-18) included a prominent “welcome,” and a message from the principal regarding the school’s academic high standards. Staff Directory (C-D-19) accessed from the Cherry Hill home page menu contained staff photos and email addresses. Another home page link was to the Cherry Hill Handbook (C-D-20). The handbook detailed expected student behavior, reinforcements for following the guidelines, and consequences for not following the rules. The guidance page (C-D-21) was accessed from a tab on the home page and explained elementary guidance services.

### *Personal Journal Fieldnotes*

Excerpts from my personal journal notations on Cherry Hill ES follow:

The preparation for this site visit was completed in early February, but inclement weather caused the visit to be postponed until mid-month. I had the files (consent forms, questions) packed in my briefcase, but needed to check camera batteries and i-Pod battery power. I briefly reminded myself of project intent on my drive to the building. And this time, there was no ‘Low Tire Warning’ light to distract me☺

I felt a deep sense of gratitude for the interviews today. The principal and teacher seemed genuine in their demeanor, had expended effort to implement PBS, and seemed to care that others learn from their trials. I had driven to Site C

using highways, but drove home slowly along unfamiliar country roads using my car compass. The slower pace of the drive allowed me to reflect upon the experience at Cherry Hill ES. I came away with a profound sense of hope for public education from the ideas and ideals of these dedicated professionals (2-19-08, personal fieldnotes).

The interviews, observations, and examinations of documents and artifacts represent attempts to develop “complex forms of recognition...getting close enough to researched communities to become able to see and assess the world from different perspectives within them” (Beech, 2003, p. 865). The descriptive analysis allows the reader to reach conclusions regarding SWPBS perceptions and practices. The next chapters, chapters 5 and 6, superimpose structures of organization upon the data.

## Chapter 5

### Comparative Analysis

Analysis of data was completed according to principles of grounded theory beginning with open coding, progressing to axial coding, and concluding with core categories (Patten, 2005). The initial analysis of the data was completed by examining the interviews, observations, documents and artifacts within each separate site (Merriam, 1998). I began by reading and reviewing the data (transcripts, documents, fieldnotes, and artifacts) several times, highlighting what information seemed meaningful, making note of possible sub-categories, and then conducting an initial data sorting (Mertler, 2006, Patten, 2005). Sorting eventually yielded more refined categories. Next, the relationships among data were explored. Finally, core categories were used to explain how the data fit together.

The research question was, “In Ohio school systems, what are the perceptions and practices of SWPBS leaders towards discipline?” Evidence of SWPBS perceptions was most often found in the participant interviews, specifically in their assumptions, motivations, aspirations, reasons, and values. Evidence of SWPBS practices was found amid the interviews, specifically in the account of a discipline incident, and in the fieldnotes of artifacts, documents, and observations.

### *Within-Site Analyses*

An analysis of SWPBS perceptions and practices within each school site was undertaken using open-coding methods rooted in grounded theory. Open-coding is a first-round analysis requiring the thorough review of data and resulting in preliminary categories called codes (Woods, Priest, & Roberts, 2002).

#### *Site A: Applefest Elementary School*

Fred and Lisa voiced similar assumptions of the community's expectation of public education. "...any society expects their schools to prepare students to be successful...not just in the academic world, but in the work world" (Lisa, 7). "They [parents] expect that their kid is going to come into the door, have a great day at school; they're going to learn" (Fred, 7). Applefest's artifacts reflected this assumption in displays of student work (A-A-20, 21, 22). The principal walk-through was intended to "observe student learning and to establish a rapport with the students" (A-D-06). The Applefest website home page (A-D-09) included a prominent "welcome," and overview of the high academic standards, the community spirit, and the positive difference that characterized the Applefest ES. The fifteen documents submitted for researcher review were all intended for external communication (A-D-01, 03, 04, 07-18).

Lisa recalled early formative influences. "I just loved school as an elementary student and I always had a good rapport with my teachers and I just always looked up to them and admired them" (Lisa, 1). Similarly to Lisa's recollections, Fred cited the influence of principals:

I looked up to some of the principals that I had, even as a youngster and I thought that would be something that I could really see myself doing. I had some, a couple

different principals along the road that I could see them as change agents (Fred, 1).

Motivation appeared both in what Fred and Lisa wanted for their students and in what they hoped to avoid. “I wanted to see less detention, suspension...I wanted to see more positive incentives for kids...and a little more ownership on the students’ part...more buy in on their [students’] part” (Fred, 2). “I think that for the most part, the teachers in this building, we like what we do. We have the kids’ best interest in mind, and that’s what drives us” (Lisa, 8). Applefest’s documents and artifacts provided ample evidence of a positive approach toward student behavior.

In terms of what Fred hoped to avoid, he referenced observing a secondary assistant principal’s job: “I thought if I have to do that [discipline] everyday, I just didn’t ever want to see myself in that position. I would be burned out quickly” (Fred, 2).

Referring to her experience in another elementary school building, Lisa stated:

We could be half way through the quarter and the students already realized that they had missed a number of stamps to exclude them from the activity then there was nothing to keep them going. There was nothing to motivate them. It’s kind of like, “Well I’m out.” So they didn’t bother. They didn’t put the effort into their behavior or their completing their homework or whatever. (Lisa, 2)

The effectiveness of SWPBS was explained by Lisa and Fred in similar ways. Common concepts included positive impact, academic gains, and student ownership. The impact of SWPBS was considered to be positive among the students, parents, and staff. “So the more positive we have in place...it really resonated with the staff and the students and the parents too, and they really appreciate hearing the positives” (Fred, 2).

“I’ve been very pleased with everything” (Fred, 10). “Well...handling behavior in a positive way creates just an overall positive atmosphere” (Lisa, 5). “[Students] are more focused...they understand why they’re here in school” (Fred, 5). “I think students will stay on task, more when they have these positives...” (Fred, 5). “We’re not going to take kids out of the instruction” (Fred, 5). “...positive behavior supports take time but is time well spent” (Fred, 4). “...be patient...it’s not all going to fall into place at once” (Lisa, 6). “I see them following other students’ examples” (Lisa, 5). “Socially we can work things out...it’s great to tie it back into a model that the kids have come up with” (Fred, 5). Referring to the students’ ownership of the discipline process, Lisa commented, “I think the students kind of felt like they had a say in the creation of the rules. With that in mind, since they had a say, I think that makes them feel a little more accountable” (Lisa, 5).

There was evidence of SWPBS effectiveness at Applefest ES including “Excellent” rating on ODE report card (A-D-11), the teacher’s and the principal’s accounts of discipline (Lisa, 4; & Fred, 4), and observation of practice. Yet, the principal expressed a goal of obtaining additional SWPBS data. “...a program called SWIS [School-wide Information System]. That is something I’d like to take a closer look at, to track certain behaviors...hopefully we’ll start here” (Fred, 10).

The positive school culture was valued by both Fred and Lisa. Mutual respect was evident in the following excerpts: “...so it’s [SWPBS] really become a part of the culture of the school” (Fred, 9) “I think that you have to have good teachers who really care about the kids...coming here each day wanting not only to teach, but guide them socially, emotionally” (Fred, 8). “The building leadership - you can’t help but make a point to understand that the building leadership has a lot to do with the staff morale” (Lisa, 8).



“We feel like we’re all here to help and support each other” (Lisa, 4). “Oh, there are so many things about our school that are so good...I think the overall morale of the staff is just incredible” (Lisa, 8). Fred explained his leadership style in facilitating the SWPBS discussion among his staff:

I didn’t lead so much the meeting. I facilitated and listened to their ideas. And they [staff] came up with some great ideas, so they’re the ones that have to facilitate the program in the classroom, and giving it to the students to be in charge of. They had to have a big stake in it. So getting teachers involved and not making the decision, letting the teachers come up with it (Fred, 6).

Fred and Lisa shared similar goals. Both searched for positive outcomes for students, “I honestly say I see more kids for positive things than ever for negative...the scales are turned” (Fred, 2). “...the whole philosophy of the program...it says that teachers wanted to be recognizing the positive rather than focusing on the negative...” (Lisa, 2). The Applefest’s documents examined for this research suggested the SWPBS practices were consistent with this positive philosophy.

#### *Site B: Blueberry Elementary School*

Both the principal and the teacher discussed the attraction to their chosen professions. “Children. That I wanted to make a difference with children. They are full of energy and full of life and I just wanted to be a part of that” (Karen, 1). Teacher Julia explained:

I think what attracted me was my mom was a teacher and I always helped her. And I had some great teachers throughout my life. And it just seemed the natural thing to do and it’s something that I always enjoy doing. I got lots of opportunities

in high school and such to exercise those abilities. I had a lot of people invest their time with me (Julia, 1).

One shared assumption was that expected behavior needs to be explicitly taught. “If they [students] don’t understand something, we reteach it ‘til they get it” (Karen, 2). Julia elaborated:

It took a lot of input from the staff: ‘What do we really believe? What do we want the children to do in the hallways? What do we want them to act like in the cafeteria?’ We realized that those [skills] need to be taught and re-taught, and for some children, re-taught and re-taught (Julia, 2).

Throughout Blueberry Elementary - the classrooms, hallways, office, etc. – consistent behavioral messages were posted (B-A-14-18, 21, 24, 27, 28).

Another assumption shared by Karen and Julia was communication about beliefs leads to effective practices. “We’ve had to talk about beliefs” (Julia, 6). Karen expanded upon the importance of communication:

To do a lot of talking. Some people want the document, they want that referral form. They want that reward system, ...they want something. And that’s not the important part. The important part is talking. Talking first among staff members to see what expectations are. What do we believe? What do we want? (Karen, 6).

During my interview with Julia, I was shown two large binders documenting team meetings, evidence of monthly meetings held over two academic years (1/31/08Fn).

Reasons for using SWPBS included the benefits of a common language, the consistency with academic teaching practices, and the effectiveness of the approach.

“There’s common ground. We all have the same language” (Julia, 3). Karen also remarked on the benefits of a common language:

Well, one I think it’s given them a language. They have that common language where they can talk to each other...We teach them what they need to do. We do it individually; we do it in groups, small groups. We do it in whole groups. So I think that the atmosphere and what we’re teaching adds to an increase in their social skills (Karen, 5).

Academic success and SWPBS were viewed by the teacher and the principal as interdependent; documents and artifacts corroborated the link between achievement and behavior. The Blueberry ES web page mentioned in its mission, “academic growth” and “respect for the community” (B-D-01). Students’ academic progress and behavior progress were posted in the school’s hallways (B-A-19, 29, 30) and were published in quarterly newsletters (B-D-12 & 13). The following statement from Karen summarized the Blueberry ES belief system:

Well we truly believe, every staff member believes, that academics and behavior go hand and hand. And so if we focus in on the behavior aspect, academics increases. And if you want to look at an arbitrary number, our test scores are going up. It’s, we are seeing some benefits [of SWPBS] in just that one test. And I’m not going to put over all my eggs in one basket, but academically, I think more learning is going on. I mean there are things that we’ve done academically, but behaviorally adds to that. And you can’t pull it apart (Karen, 5).

The educational aspects of explicitly teaching the expected behaviors were captured in Karen’s comments:

It is a lot of re-teaching. And I think that is what we like about this program. We teach everything else and yet behavior is something that we've never taught before, directly taught, I should say. It's always been a part of education. But now we have assemblies and we talk about what our expectations are and we follow up in small groups and we have discussion in our classroom. So it [SWPBS] is a part of our curriculum. I think because of that, the students are taking it upon themselves to interact and to follow through (Karen, 3).

Both Karen and Julia were motivated, albeit in different ways, by school leaders. "I thought that there were better ways of doing things" (Karen, 1).

...the principal...she wouldn't like me to say this, but I really think a lot of the good things we have going on here are because of her personality and because of her leadership. She brings ideas to us. The staff is very unique that if she's got an idea we usually say, "Well sure let's run with it." We embrace [ideas] and we try lots of new things. We see what works. (Julia, 8).

Both the principal and the teacher expressed the values of their SWPBS approach. "And if you walk the hallways, or when you walk the hallways, what I've been told is that you can sense just this belonging, that everybody feels as though they belong. I mean I've been told that by outsiders when they walk through they can feel it" (Karen, 5). "So many kids now need to know that there is a stable person that is going to care about them and be their friend and have consistent boundaries" (Julia, 1).

I think that this building is made up of individuals that care about kids, care about their job, care about the community, and really will do anything in their power to make it happen. And I think that's where we start. It's the talking and

communication that we give to one another and to the community, I think, that makes it grow. It is the people. It is the values (Karen, 8).

I think behaviorally they [parents] expect us to teach the children the difference between right and wrong. I think they expect us to teach them the social skills they need and problem-solving skills and respect of property and just our general expectations, or laws that we have as a society (Karen, 7).

A number of postings in the halls at Blueberry Elementary echoed these values (B-A-22 & 23, 25 & 26).

*Site C: Cherry Hill Elementary School*

Early formative experiences resonated for both Jim and Kathy. “I want to do this. I want to make a positive difference in hopefully society and helping kids and teaching. And I never looked back. I’ve always been excited” (Jim, 1). Kathy also had positive recollections:

For me I had a second grade teacher that just, I loved the year. It was exciting all the time. She brought a real joy to it. From that point on, that’s all I ever wanted to do, was to be in the classroom. I wanted to have an impact on students as she had on my life. I really need to make that lasting impact (Kathy, 1).

Jim and Kathy at Cherry Hill shared similar assumptions about discipline. “Discipline in my opinion should be learning, taking your mistake, learning from it, and applying it so that it doesn’t occur again” (Jim, 3). Kathy referred to learning from one’s mistake as a teachable moment:

We kind of just had a round table discussion with him about, more as a teachable moment for the social skills of this particular student needs to learn. How this

affects not just that child and not just myself, but anybody else who has been involved in the incident. Just trying to get more to the root of the problem (Kathy, 3).

Jim understood the cost of implementing a school-wide change: “Anything worthwhile costs you something, either time, money, effort of some kind” (Jim, 5). The underlying philosophy of Cherry Hill’s approach was explained by Jim:

We’ve got to have that shared philosophy. What are we trying to do here? Are we trying to build kids up and encourage them to do the right thing and then praise that or do we want to just catch them doing everything wrong and criticize them for it and then punish them. It’s just a philosophy. Getting your staff into that philosophy is probably a key component of it too. You have to have that shared positive behavior thought that ‘what do we want to accentuate and highlight here. (Jim, 6).

Kathy credited Jim with the vision to implement SWPBS, while Jim reported wanting better outcomes for the school.

So it was definitely a vision that Jim had for the building and then the rest of us were kind of along for the ride at first and then began to see the same vision. As we went through the training we began to realize that this could really work here (Kathy, 2).

Our test scores had come in over the summer. We weren’t where I still thought we should be for the quality of teacher and kids that we have here. Coming off of a three hundred and some behavior referral year it just kind of just hit me, I think we ought to try this (Jim, 2).

The building's SWIS data showed an average of 1.5 discipline referrals per day for the 2005-06 school year, consistent with Jim's recollection of 300+ discipline referrals (C-D-10). Ohio Department of Education Building Report Card showed that Cherry Hill ES was "Effective" for the 2005-06 school year.

The SWPBS practices at Cherry Hill ES contributed to safety, achievement, and students' social skills. "That [safety] has been great because with that consistency, the kids know that as they're walking down the hall somebody is noticing them" (Kathy, 5). "Safety wise it is much improved obviously with kids who are not running in the halls. You have kids who are following the expectations so they are less likely to cause accidents" (Jim, 5). Cherry Hill Elementary School's SWIS data indicated a decline from more than 70 referrals for aggression/fighting in the 2005-06 academic year to less than 15 referrals for same behavior as of mid-year 2007-08 (C-D-10).

"Oh, that's [academic learning] much more improved. We're not dealing with as many behavior issues" (Kathy, 5). "Academic learning, our reading scores have gone up every year for the last two years that this has implemented, actually going on our third" (Jim, 5). SWIS data on location of referrals were consistent with interviewees' recollections; referrals from classroom locations had declined from over 65 referrals during the 2005-06 school year to 15 referrals as of mid-year 2007-08 (C-D-10).

Social skill benefits were explained by both the principal and the teacher. "Social side, social skills, I know our guidance counselor also utilizes this and if we see any trend or anything then she's right on that with her lessons" (Jim, 5).

So in terms of their social skills I've seen a lot of growth with our kids in that regard. Being more polite, being more tolerant, being more respectful overall. So

in terms of all three of those areas I've really seen the SWPBS be very effective for our building (Kathy, 5).

Reminders of the four core skills are posted throughout the building (C-D-09; C-A-12). The Cherry Hill Behavior Expectation Matrix specifies the four core skills to be displayed in all school settings (C-D-01). The expectation was that social skills are to be explicitly taught. Teacher support materials for teaching social skills included clear expectations, suggested activities, and supplemental games (C-D-04-07). Students and classes received a printed ticket - listing student name, and student's class, and which of the four core skills were observed - as recognition of positive social skills (C-D-10).

The value for the dignity and worth of the individual was clear in both Jim's and Kathy's remarks:

As we frame all of our discipline referrals, we talk about the action of the child, not the child them self, and the choice. I always try to get the kids to understand their impact on others, their decisions, and the consequences. And then tie it back to what is the responsible thing, what's the respectful thing. It's not being very respectful either to do that. And just tie it back to that and get them to tell us what they did or what they should have done. And always keep it at that level. It's the choice, not the child (Jim, 3).

So it was a nice little moment (resolution of behavior concern) for both of the children, but we, with this particular little student with a disability we're dealing with socially acceptable responses and what's appropriate and what is not appropriate. So that's been the main issue that we've been dealing with really in



our room. And he really is making strides. He's come a long way from the start of the year so we're very proud of him (Kathy, 3).

The staff had a flowchart guide for dealing with problem behaviors (C-D-03) and an office discipline referral form (C-D-02).

The value of collaboration was evident.

So you have to go about it the right way. It really takes a lot of planning; it really takes the core team to really have to talk it through. With our compromises - I think that is when we got so much more buy in from them because they saw we were willing. We weren't dictating "this is our program." They saw that we were really listening to what they were wanting and their concerns and their ideas. And that's when the dialogue really began among the staff (Kathy, 6).

You've got to be very patient in allowing this to form and develop with your staff. The more that you're able to get your staff's participation, involved in the process the better the buy in will be. And a lot of times people just say you've got to get buy in. Well my experience in this position is you get that by the participation. So you have to be committed that when you start this no matter how it's going we're going to keep going and we're going to keep massaging it and getting it to where it works for our building (Jim, 6).

The connection to community values was emphasized by both Kathy and Jim. "I think the core factor is just the sense of community that we have in this district" (Kathy, 8). "The sense of community is a broad phrase but that's what I've experienced here. It's the caring and compassion. It's a part of our mission statement that we provide what we do in a caring and progressive environment" (Jim, 8).

Our community culture here is that we want excellence. We want excellence in academics, we want excellence in athletics, we want it in arts, and we want it in relationships. When they leave our building they'll be going out into society. Society expects people to be respectful and to be problem-solvers and to be safe and to be responsible (Kathy, 7). And this program I think feeds into that because we expect our kids to be respectful and to be responsible and be safe and be a problem-solver...And that's the biggest part is that it grows into the culture here (Jim, 7).

The four core skills were posted throughout the school (C-D-09; C-A-12).

#### *Among-site Analysis*

The among-site data analysis consisted of comparisons among the three cases, looking for "replication logic," that is, whether similar concepts were evident among the cases (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006, p. 439). The aim of the among-site analysis was to answer the research question by determining the essential features of SWPBS. The among-site analysis incorporated features of axial coding, exploring tentative relationships among data (Patten, 2005; Woods, Priest, & Roberts, 2002). All data sources – interviews, observations, documents and artifacts - were reviewed for indications of the types of relationships among factors: temporal or sequential, means-end, causal, associational, valence, or spatial (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patten, 2005).

#### *Perceptions*

Generally, perceptions of SWPBS were evident from the participant interviews while SWPBS practices were evident in the documents, artifacts, fieldnotes of observations, and in the specific examples of SWPBS practices cited in the interviews.

The educators' affirmative recollections of reasons for becoming teachers or principals were consistent. "I just loved school as an elementary student and I always had a good rapport with my teachers and I just always looked up to them and admired them. And I wanted to emulate that" (Lisa, 1). "I was always interested in education, elementary education in particular, and I started as a teacher. I had a couple different principals along the road that I could see as change agents" (Fred, 1).

"I wanted to make a difference with children. They are full of energy and full of life and I just wanted to be a part of that" (Karen, 1). "I think what attracted me was my mom was a teacher and I always helped her. And I had some great teachers throughout my life. I had a lot of people invest their time with me. [Julia reported being excited by] "...the opportunity to teach kids, to teach children new things" (Julia, 1).

"I just loved helping people especially kids... I want to make a positive difference in hopefully society and helping kids and teaching. And I never looked back. I've always been excited" (Jim, 1).

For me I had a second grade teacher that just, I loved the year. It was exciting all the time. She brought a real joy to it. From that point on, that's all I ever wanted to do, was to be in the classroom. I wanted to have an impact on students as she had on my life (Kathy, 1).

An associational relationship is suggested between the participants' experiences with formative teachers and principals and the participants' affirmative vocational

aspirations. A sequential relationship is hypothesized between the early motivation to become educators and the positive motivation currently evidenced among these practitioners.

Among the interview responses there was consistent recognition of the power of the underlying thought process. The philosophical underpinnings of the leaders' visions regarding SWPBS were represented in the following excerpts:

And by listening to the whole philosophy of the program, which again was started before I came to Applefest. It says that teachers wanted to be recognizing the positive rather than focusing on the negative, that way kids would be recognized for something positive. And for making good choices (Lisa, 2).

I wanted to see less detention, suspension, not that you don't, not that there's not a place for that in the school, because there is. But I wanted to see more positive incentives for kids, just so, and a little more ownership on the students' part, on coming up with class rules or school rules, like the CORE Program (Fred, 2).

"It was a matter of searching for things that we needed. That, doing the research and trying to find out what was best for kids...And so I thought that there were better ways of doing things" (Karen, 1). "It took a lot of input from the staff, what do we really believe, what do we want the children to do in the hallways, and what do you want them to act like in the cafeteria (Julia, 2). "We've had to talk about beliefs" (Julia, 6). "To do a lot of talking.... The important part is talking. Talking first among staff members to see what expectations are. What do we believe? What do we want?" (Karen, 6).

We've got to have that shared philosophy. What are we trying to do here? Are we trying to build kids up and encourage them to do the right thing and then praise that or do we want to just catch them doing everything wrong and criticize them for it and then punish them. It's just a philosophy. Getting your staff into that philosophy is probably a key component of it too (Jim, 6). So it was definitely a vision that Jim had for the building and then the rest of us were kind of along for the ride at first and then began to see the same vision. As we went through the training we began to realize that this [SWPBS] could really work here (Kathy, 2).

The reflections of the principals and teachers suggest a causal relationship between philosophy of practice or vision and resulting SWPBS implementation.

The general assumptions shared among the research participants were examined. Fred and Lisa voiced similar beliefs regarding the community's expectation of public education. "...any society expects their schools to prepare students to be successful...not just in the academic world, but in the work world" (Lisa, 7). "They [parents] expect that their kid is going to come into the door, have a great day at school; they're going to learn" (Fred, 7). The community expects "...we're going to help kids whether it be behavior or academics" (Julia, 7). "I think behaviorally they expect us to teach the children the difference between right and wrong. I think they expect us to teach them the social skills they need and problem-solving skills and respect of property and just our general expectations, or laws that we have as a society" (Karen, 7).

Another general assumption shared by all study participants was that behavior can be and should be explicitly taught. "Discipline in my opinion should be learning, taking your mistake, learning from it, and applying it so that it doesn't occur again" (Jim, 3).

“We kind of just had a round table discussion with him about, more as a teachable moment for the social skills of this particular student needs to learn” (Kathy, 3). This assumption was evident at Blueberry Elementary. “We realized those need to be taught and re-taught” (Julia, 2). “If they [students] don’t understand something, we reteach it ‘til they get it” (Karen, 2).

And we just say, “You need to show self control, you need to show good listening skills, you need to be cooperative.” Well, they [the students] don’t know what that means. They don’t know what it looks like. So with positive behavior supports and when they see other students praised and rewarded, so to speak, some, not all, but some tend to follow suit” (Lisa, 5). It was just a little sensitivity training that I did instead. He watched this five minute clip on my computer and we talked about it. I think that that was more effective than any detention or whatever it would have been (Fred, 3).

These shared assumptions –the community expects the school to instill behavior skills and behavior skills can be explicitly taught – seem indicative of a rationale relationship with participants’ vision/philosophy.

Interview question 8 asked, “What is the *core factor* that gives this school the life and vitality?” The principals’ and teachers’ responses generally pointed to staff morale.

A possible associational factor contributing to SWPBS is staff morale.

I think that you have to have good teachers that really care about the kids. You might have a couple nay-sayers, but you have to ultimately have the majority of your staff, coming here each day wanting to really, not only teach, but guide them socially, emotionally (Fred, 8).

Although morale may be an associational factor, Lisa's response contributes evidence it may be a causal factor:

I think the overall morale of the staff is just incredible. And I just think that makes, it affects everything. It affects the kids, it affects our motivation, and it affects our drive to provide successful instruction to the point where students can be successful (Lisa, 8).

Julia initially answered question eight with a tribute to the principal's leadership, then linked the vitality to a supportive staff.

The staff is very unique that if she's got an idea we usually say, "Well sure let's run with it." I really think that she has a lot of energy and a lot of great ideas about how to help students. But if she didn't have the kind of staff that we have, I don't think it would work either (Julia, 8).

Julia's principal, Karen, attributed the school's vitality to the teachers.

The people. I think that this building is made up of individuals that care about kids, care about their job, care about the community, and really will do anything in their power to make it happen. I think that's where we start. It's the talking and communication that we give to one another and to the community, I think, that makes it grow (Karen, 8).

Jim and Kathy also viewed staff as powerful agents in SWPBS implementation. "The staff is on board" (Kathy, 6). "The more that you're able to get your staff's participation, involved in the process the better the buy in will be" (Jim, 6).

Thus, staff morale appears to be related as an associational factor, or arguably as a causal factor, to leadership. The teachers attributed staff morale and/or SWPBS initiative

to the effective leadership of their respective principals. “Well basically Jim had started to look into this and made contacts with our SERRC [Special Educational Regional Resource Center – a satellite of ODE]... So it was definitely a vision that Jim had for the building” (Kathy, 2). “The building leadership - you can’t help but make a point to understand that the building leadership has a lot to do with staff morale” (Lisa, 8).

I think a lot of it, now I came here the principal’s second year, and I really think, and she wouldn’t like me to say this, but I really think a lot of the good things we have going on here are because of her personality and because of her leadership. She brings ideas to us (Julia, 8).

Among participants’ commentaries were their connections to the broader community. The relationship of these values to SWPBS practices are at least spatial, but may be classified as temporal or causal factors. The values of these practitioners were evident in the following excerpts. “Society in general, I think, any society expects their schools to prepare students to be successful. And not just in the academic world, but in the work world” (Lisa, 7). “They [parents] expected that their kid is going to come in to the door, have a great day at school. They’re going to learn (Fred, 7). “I think that when you have a positive climate and a positive culture in your building and you have positive supports in place it just resonates with the community” (Fred, 5).

“I think they [parents] really see a lot of good things come out of some of the changes that we’ve made. And I think we were kind of labeled the school that makes differences...That we’re going to help kids” (Julia, 7). “It’s the talking and communication that we give to one another and to the community, I think, that makes it grow. It’s our values. It’s who we are as a collective whole” (Karen, 8).



Our community culture here is that we want excellence... When you have something special like that and then you foster it and you guard it. I think that's what this community here wants. And this program I think feeds into that because we expect our kids to be respectful and to be responsible and be safe and be a problem-solver (Jim, 7).

"The sense of community is a broad phrase but that's what I've experienced here. It's the caring and compassion. It's a part of our mission statement that we provide what we do in a caring and progressive environment '(Jim, 8). "I love that community aspect. So for me I think the core factor is just the sense of community that we have in this district" (Kathy, 8).

In summary, the general perceptions of SWPBS leaders interviewed for this study included: desiring to make a difference among students, envisioning more effective behavioral practices, and valuing the community.

### *Practices*

The three elementary schools had a number of consistent SWPBS practices. The behavior practices were defined for the staff in each school, although the format of the explanation varied – internal memo, faculty agenda, handbook, or flow-chart. (A-D-05 & 06, B-D-11, and C-D-03 & 04).

All buildings had the core positive behaviors prominently posted in the building (A-A-19, B-A-15, C-A-12). Similarly, each building had a matrix table of school locations as column headings and core behaviors as row headings (A-D-18, B-A-21, and C-D-01).

Applefest ES and Blueberry ES used rewards tickets given to students while Cherry Hill ES used reward tickets for individual students or whole classes exhibiting appropriate behavior (A-D-08, B-D-09, and C-D-08). These token slips were then redeemable for an incentive.

All three elementary schools had active websites with a home page principal's welcome (A-D-09, B-D-01, and C-D-18). The home page had a link to faculty-staff directory (A-D-10, B-D-02, and C-D-19) allowing parents and community to access school personnel.

Office Referral Forms were internal documents used to report and categorize behavior concerns (A-D-02, B-D-10, and C-D-02). These referral forms had similar components, including demographic information, problem behavior, possible motivation and consequence. All three elementary schools were either using SWIS, a behavior data-management system, or considering its use.

In summary, the consistency of SWPBS practices included posting of core rules prominently throughout the buildings, using a matrix to depict behavioral expectation throughout the school, giving reward tickets to students who exemplify expected behavior, collaborating with staff regarding behavior expectations, actively teaching pro-social behavior, charting behavior, and using office referral forms to record and respond to inappropriate student behavior.

This chapter has analyzed the data obtained from interviews, observations, documents and artifacts. The analyses were both within-site and among-sites. The within-site analyses reported consistencies of perceptions and practices within each of the three elementary sites. The among-site analysis extracted SWPBS perceptions and practices

common to all sites. The next chapter, chapter 6, interprets the research data according to emergent themes.

## Chapter 6

### Interpretive Analysis

Interpretation involves identifying the underlying framework (Glesne, 2006). The underlying framework of SWPBS required understanding how perceptions and practices were linked. The results from the among-site analysis described in Chapter 5 were scrutinized in an effort to understand how SWPBS perceptions and practices were interrelated. A flowchart (see Appendix C) was used to represent the information from the among-site analysis, with thoughtful reflection on how leaders progressed from one stage of thinking/acting to the next stage. Ultimately, four themes emerged that seemed to describe the links among the stages: acquiring, adapting, instilling and inspiring. The evolution of these core categories are represented in Table 2, beginning with the preliminary coding of data to the four themes that emerged from the analyses.

School leaders' perceptions regarding SWPBS appeared to be acquired and/or refined through both formative experiences as well as through specific SWPBS training experiences. School leaders were motivated to share their visions with the school staff. The discussion of SWPBS among school staff was collaborative, resulting in adapting SWPBS practices to the school and community culture. The core beliefs were identified at this stage. The practices supporting these beliefs were developed and/or refined. The SWPBS practices consisted of instilling the visions, values, and aspirations into teaching. Ultimately the resultant practices may inspire future leaders.

Table 2

*Emergence of Themes*

Preliminary Open Coding Examples	Second-round Open Coding Examples	Axial Coding	Core Categories
Early influence of positive role model	Motivation	Formative Practices	Acquiring
Positive discipline program	Vision	Leader's Perceptions	Adapting
Desire for more positive role & concern about negative	Values	Shared SWPBS Perceptions	Instilling
Impact of PBS	Assumptions	SWPBS Practices	Inspiring
Vision	Aspirations		
Safety	SWPBS Activities		
Academic			
Social			
Leadership			
Parent/society expectations			

### *Perceptions: Acquiring and Adapting*

The first two concepts, acquiring and adapting, refer first to school leaders learning skills and ideas from formative experiences and through explicit SWPBS training, and refer next to leaders adapting their perceptions through purposeful collaboration with staff.

School leaders who rely on more traditional practices, including Zero Tolerance Policy, may have values more often rooted in self-interest (economic interests and power) and economy (efficiency and economic growth). By contrast, school leaders using contemporary discipline practices, notably SWPBS, seemed to place a premium on the democratic values (liberty, equality, and fraternity) and the general social values (order and individualism) (Fowler, 2004). “I think that you have to have good teachers who really care about the kids...coming here each day wanting not only to teach, but guide them socially, emotionally” (Fred, 8). The value for the dignity and worth of the individual was clear in Jim’s discipline framework, “As we frame all of our discipline referrals, we talk about the action of the child, not the child himself, and the choice” (Jim, 3). The democratic and social values were also evident in Jim’s remarks:

I think the core factor is just the sense of community that we have in this district.

Our community does very much have high expectations for us [Cherry Hill].

Those four things [core values] are things that when they leave our building they’ll be going out into society. Society expects people to be respectful and to be problem-solvers and to be safe and to be responsible. Having this SWPBS as we already talked in one of the other questions about how it has contributed positively to our school safety and security and our academics and the social

skills. That all goes in line with what our community is wanting when they are in this building. They see those things and that just feeds on the expectations of what they already have of the excellence (Jim, 8).

Karen and Julia contributed similar values. “If you walk the hallways, or when you walk the hallways, what I’ve been told is that you can sense just this belonging, that everybody feels as though they belong. I mean I’ve been told that by outsiders when they walk through they can feel it” (Karen, 5). “So many kids now need to know that there is a stable person that is going to care about them and be their friend and have consistent boundaries” (Julia, 1).

I think that this building is made up of individuals that care about kids, care about their job, care about the community, and really will do anything in their power to make it happen. I think that’s where we start. It’s the talking and communication that we give to one another and to the community, I think, that makes it grow. It is the people. It is the values (Karen, 8). I think behaviorally they [parents] expect us to teach the children the difference between right and wrong. I think they expect us to teach them the social skills they need and problem-solving skills and respect of property and just our general expectations, or laws that we have as a society (Karen, 7).

A number of postings in the halls at Blueberry Elementary echoed these values (B-A-22 & 23, 25 & 26). The connection to community was evocative of organizational theory. It was Senge (2006) who noted the school’s potential to transform children into effective citizens of a global community; the study participants voiced a similar perspective.

Historically, power based on authority has characterized public education. From the late twentieth century to present time, authoritarian claims to power have been weakened in society and in education. Understanding and using alternative sources of power is considered essential for school leaders (Fowler, 2004). Indeed, this study contains evidence of transformational leadership with its characteristic shared power (Blase & Anderson, 1995; Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005). Fred explained his role as facilitator:

I didn't lead so much the meeting; I facilitated and listened to their ideas. They [staff] came up with some great ideas, so they're the ones that have to facilitate the program in the classroom, and giving it to the students to be in charge of. They had a big stake in it. So [my advice is] getting teachers involved and not making the decision [independently of staff], letting the teachers come up with it (Fred, 6).

Lisa indicated, "The building leadership - you can't help but make a point to understand that building leadership has a lot to do with the staff morale" (Lisa, 8).

The synergy of this relationship was evident in Karen's remarks:

I think that this building is made up of individuals that care about kids, care about their job, care about the community, and really will do anything in their power to make it happen. It's the talking and communication that we give to one another and to the community, I think, that makes it grow. It's our values. It's who we are as a collective whole. And it's the synergy of all of us coming together (Karen, 8).

We are reminded through Lisa's comments that the students, too, have a role in leadership: "I think the students kind of felt like they had a say in the creation of the



rules. With that in mind, since they had a say, I think that makes them feel a little more accountable” (Lisa, 5).

Values and authority are sociological constructs. The SWPBS school leaders in this study evidenced social and democratic values and tended to share authority.

### *Practices: Instilling and Inspiring*

The first two concepts, acquiring and adapting, refer to school leaders learning skills and collaborating with staff to refine ideas. The later two concepts, instilling and inspiring, are connected to school leaders’ SWPBS practices.

School-wide positive behavior support practices place a premium on prevention through an understanding of antecedent strategies. Lisa noted the effect of trying to promote good choices, one aspect of instilling SWPBS practice:

At Applefest, the teachers want to recognize the positive [student behavior] and good choices rather than focusing on the negative. “I just think it, we kind of feel like we’re all here to help and support each other. It’s not, well this kid’s a discipline problem I’m just going to send him to the office. (Lisa, 4)

Similarly, Julia mentioned, “Anytime you can teach anything positive it’s going to have a positive effect on the students” (Julia, 5). Also at Blueberry ES, Karen discussed the expectations:

It is a lot of re-teaching. And I think that is what we like about this program. We teach everything else and yet behavior is something that we’ve never taught before, directly taught, I should say. It’s always been a part of education. But now we have assemblies and we talk about what our expectation are and we follow up in small groups and we have discussion in our classroom. So it [SWPBS] is apart

of our curriculum. I think because of that, that's why the students are taking it upon themselves to interact and to follow through. (Karen, 3)

At Cherry Hill ES, Jim indicated the effectiveness of applying principles of teaching to behavior.

Discipline is, in my opinion, that's half of this is the teaching. It's not only the teaching of what we expect but also the teaching from learning. I think that's what discipline is. Discipline in my opinion should be learning, taking your mistake, learning from it, and applying it so that it doesn't occur again. (Jim, 3)

School-wide positive behavior support practices were regularly monitored through data. SWPBS practice, consistent with positive psychology, is both to prevent or reduce the incidence of problem behavior and to promote human potential and optimal functioning. Fred indicated a plan to more precisely measure Applefest's progress. "I would like to track some of the behavior referrals with a program called SWIS. That is something that I'd like to look at closer look, to track certain behaviors. So that's something that hopefully we'll start here" (Fred, 10).

Julia has played a vital role in using data at Blueberry ES. She published a quarterly newsletter sent to parents with reports of SWPBS. Her comments:

We look at the data. This last nine weeks our statistics showed that we had some issue with physical aggression. So we've addressed that with our guidance counselor and he's running an anger management group. With the system that we have we record our forms through SWIS and that gives us good reports and statistics. We can look at that [SWIS data] as a SWPBS committee every month and say, "Well, where are our issues? What do we need to address?" (Julia, 5)

Jim was similarly enthusiastic about the use of data:

On the social side, social skills, I know our guidance counselor also utilizes this [SWPBS] and if we see any trend [from SWIS data] or anything then she's right on that with her lessons. She goes into every classroom and does lesson each week. There can be a focus - if all of a sudden we're trending something in the disrespect, or aggression or inappropriate language - then she can try to focus on those kinds of needs. So I think that's helped. I think our kids overall are a lot better together, I mean just getting along. It's not perfect, you don't ever find that, but it is a lot better. (Jim, 5)

Psychological theory constructs – alterable variables, skill deficits, and protective factors – were applied to the interviews (Christenson & Thurlow, 2004; Greene, 2001; Hergenhahn & Olson, 1997; Petras et. al., 2004). The participants' use of data was consistent with understanding the role of alterable variables in managing student behavior. Similarly, use of lessons to address behavior was consistent with the constructs of students' social skill deficits. Both the attention to alterable variables and the remediation of student skill deficits were consistent with creating a caring school environment which, in turn, served as a protective factor in further reducing misbehavior.

The teachers' and principals' stories of their management of student misbehavior provided a microcosm of the SWPBS constructs. Their stories are excerpted from their interviews in their entirety in the section that follows.

#### *Principal Fred's Sensitivity Session*

I had one student last month who was brought into my office for making fun of another student with a disability. He was saying some things which were

somewhat derogatory and kind of imitating and it was very uncalled for and inappropriate. I thought ... I could give him more than just a detention. I could suspend him, there are so many things that I could have done. But I thought that maybe a different approach would be to show him a little clip on my computer of, it's called the Team Hoyt video. It's about a father and a son. The father cares for someone with Cerebral Palsy. It [video clip] just shows how people overlook differences and how we're all the same in so many ways. It was just a little sensitivity training that I did instead. He [the student] watched this five minute clip on my computer and we talked about it. I think that [sensitivity training] was more effective than any detention. (Fred, 3)

#### *Teacher Lisa Rescues Recess*

About three or four weeks ago, I had two students who sit in close proximity in the classroom, and apparently there was some kicking under the desk and a little sly name calling that I wasn't aware of. But, of course, during indoor recess, it kind of blew up and they got in trouble with the recess supervisor because they had carried it to that next level. What I did to keep the situation from escalating was, or before I blamed either one or corrected either one or gave any type of consequence, I just pulled each of them out individually to let them tell me their side of the story. Before they started [explaining] I just said, "I'm not angry with you, I just want to know what happened." I got each student's version of the story and then I pulled them together and we talked about how problems can escalate if you don't try to take care of them right away.

We talked about how each of them had the opportunity to put a stop to that by seeking out the help of an adult if they could no longer handle it, or something. They both identified to me where they could have done something differently. They could have made a different choice and then the situation wouldn't have gotten to the point that it did. They responded favorably to that because they didn't feel backed into a corner. I gave each of them the opportunity to explain. They talked about it and they each admitted their part of causing the problem. We talked about it, and then I asked them later that day, "Are you guys okay, is everything okay because we have a whole half of a school year yet to go." We can't start building, what do I want to say, harboring bad feelings toward one another. They apologized to each other. Typically what's funny about that is that they normally work very well together in a group. Maybe that particular day they were just getting on each other's nerves. (Lisa, 3)

#### *Principal Karen Sees Student as Teacher*

For me [an example of effective discipline practice] it is when children stop each other. First graders were misbehaving in the bathroom. There was an adult walking by, but it was the child that said, "That that's not what we expect." Those were the words that he used, "That's not what we expect." I followed up with it and with both the children. One [child] told the other child, "You know what you need to come in here and do. That's what we expect." But with the child that stopped the other child, I just praised because he took it upon himself. He [the student] knew exactly what to do and then had the courage to talk to that other child. I think that's fantastic. (Karen, 3)

### *Teacher Julia and the Drinking Fountain Incident*

Well, yesterday. I was in the hallway coming down after I took my children to special [class, e.g. art, music or physical education] and there was a little boy in the hallway and there was a drinking fountain down by the office. I didn't know his name. He was playing in the water fountain. I asked him, I said, "What are you doing?" "I'm filling up my water bottle." "Really? It appears to me that you're playing." I said, "Are you playing?" "Yes." I said, "What should you be doing right now?" "Uh, I should be going back to my classroom." "That's right, because what do we believe here at Blueberry, why are you here?" "I'm here to learn." "That's right." I followed him back to his classroom and was able to share with the classroom teacher. He still had to move his clothes pin [behavior consequence] in the classroom, but there's that interaction. I didn't know this child's name, but he could still tell me why he was here and what we believe at Blueberry. So I can come in and say, "The boy that I just sent to you, he wasn't using his time well, he wasn't being his best." And I could explain to the teacher in a matter of a few short sentences what was happening, instead of telling her, "Well so-and-so he..." you know exactly what he was doing. I didn't have to get upset with the child because he already knew; he could tell me what we believed (Julia, 3).

### *Principal Jim Encounters the Little Lie*

Oh boy. I don't know if this is newsworthy or not, but the last student that I dealt with, I dealt with a first grade student who actually lied. She came up to talk to

me. As we frame all of our discipline referrals, we talk about the action of the child, not the child himself, and the choice. All choices have consequences. Most of our choices having good consequences, but some of them have negative or bad consequences. Our decisions not only affecting us but how many people can be effected by our good and bad decisions. In that case I basically, we always look right up at the building blocks and I just simply asked her, “Which of the expectations do you feel you did not follow?” She immediately said “I wasn’t being responsible.” I said “How were you not being responsible?” and had her tell me. “What should you have done? What was the responsible thing to do?” We talked about “Okay, you made a choice to do something not being responsible. How many people did that affect?” We talked about the fact that the cafeteria worker had to stop what she was doing because she thought this girl was highly allergic to peanuts and she was trying to serve her a peanut butter sandwich. The girl didn’t want the peanut butter sandwich because she was out of money and already charged her maximum. Instead of getting a peanut butter sandwich, she tried to divert and get a lunch deceitfully, even though she was not following the rules. That person [the lunch worker] had to go get the teacher out of her lunch and then she was concerned; “Oh, my gosh I didn’t know she was allergic to peanuts!” We had to call mom at work. Then her mom had to get off [work] which interrupted everybody in her place of business. It interrupted me. All of a sudden I can see her understanding that you’re impacting an awful lot of people with one little tiny lie.

I always try to get the kids to understand their impact on others, their decisions, and the consequences. I tie it back to what is the responsible thing, what's the respectful thing. I just tie it back to that [respect and responsibility] and get them [student] to tell us what they did or what they should have done. I always keep it at that level. It's the choice, not the child.

"I'm not mad at you. I'm not upset with you. I'm more disappointed with your choice." I think that's a very effective way of dealing with it.

It's not how I did it when I started. It used to be 'everything-that's-wrong' kind of deal. This [SWPBS] has helped shift it back a little bit to making the kids tell us what they should have done, why they should have done it, and how it not only affects them but everybody around them.

Discipline is, in my opinion, is the teaching. It's not only the teaching of what we expect but also the teaching from learning. I think that's what discipline is. Discipline in my opinion should be learning: taking your mistake, learning from it, and applying it so that it doesn't occur again. (Jim, 3)

#### *Teacher Kathy Gives Special Lesson in Social Skills*

I will have to say that I've had a very easy year in terms of discipline with my class this year. One thing that comes to mind is I have a student who has some anger issues with some other students at times. He's not very tolerant of others. He's a student with a disability. He just struggles with the correct social aspects of dealing with others when he doesn't feel he wants to deal with them. We had a situation where a student, another student was just trying to be pleasant and polite to him and helping him out. Well it's not what he wanted and he lashed out. It was just more of a one-on-one with him about



discussing what was appropriate, how should he have handled that better, helping him to see. We met with the other student that was trying to help him and had that child express to this little boy why he did what he did. That he did not mean anything out of malice. He really just cared and was trying to be polite and pleasant. So we kind of just had a round table discussion with him about, more as a teachable moment for the social skills of this particular student needs to learn. It was also good for the other child to see that you're going to encounter this now and again in life. (Kathy, 3)

These participants' stories followed a patterned response: (a) acquiring information on the student(s)' behavior, (b) adapting one's thinking to consideration of the problem at hand and the options available, (c) instilling positive behavior practices, and (d) attaining an outcome that inspires future SWPBS practice. The constructs and abbreviated stories are represented in Table 3.

The perceptions of the teachers and principals regarding student behavior involved managing their own emotional response – “I didn't have to get upset” [Julia, 4], considering the student's needs and issues, and remembering tenets of PBS – “What do we believe?” [Julia, 4]. The SWPBS practices primarily involved talking with and assisting the student in linking the behavior to the core rules and values. Building these interrelationships among behavior, rules and values was consistent with principles of cognitive theory. The participants concluded their stories with inspirational endings: “And I think that was more effective than any detention” [Fred, 4], “They knew what to do and I think that's fantastic” [Karen, 4], “It was good for the child” [Kathy, 4]. “They apologized to each other” [Lisa, 4], “All of a sudden, I can see her saying, ‘I'm impacting an awful lot of people with one little tiny lie’” [Jim, 4], “He could tell me why he was here and what we believe at Blueberry ES” [Julia, 4].

Table 3

*Discipline Stories*

	<i>Acquiring</i> Information on student behavior	<i>Adapting</i> Adult's perceptions	<i>Instilling</i> PBS practices	<i>Inspiring</i> Outcome
Principal Fred <i>Sensitivity Session</i>	Made fun of a student with a disability	Very uncalled for; inappropriate...I could suspend him...maybe a different approach...	It was a little sensitivity training I did instead...he watched a video clip and we talked.	And I think that was more effective than any detention.
Teacher Lisa <i>Rescuing Recess</i>	Kicking under the desk and a little sly name calling...it blew up	Before I blamed either one or corrected...or gave any type of consequence	We talked. They both identified to me where they could have done something differently.	"Are you guys okay, is everything okay?"...They apologized to each other.
Principal Karen <i>Student as Teacher</i>	Misbehaving in the restroom	They knew exactly what to do and one child had the courage to talk to the other student.	It was the child that said, "That's not what we expect." I praised that child.	They [the students] knew what to do. And I think that's fantastic!
Teacher Julia <i>Drinking Fountain Incident</i>	Playing in water fountain	What do we believe? I didn't have to get upset.	Asked child, "What are you doing? What should you be doing?"	He could tell me why he was here and what we believe at Blueberry.
Principal Jim <i>The Little Lie</i>	Student who lied	We [staff] talk about the actions of the child, not the child themselves, and the choice. All choices have consequences.	I simply asked her, "Which of the expectations do you feel you did not follow?"	All of a sudden I can see her saying, "I'm impacting an awful lot of people with one little tiny lie."
Teacher Kathy <i>Special Lesson in Social Skills</i>	Student lashed out at another student who was trying to help.	Student has anger issues and is not very tolerant; he struggles with the correct social aspects of dealing with others.	We had a round table discussion.	A teachable moment for the social skills this student needs to learn; it was good for the child...you need to know how.

The perceptions and practices of the principals and teachers appeared to represent a paradigm shift. Extracted from the review of research, traditional approaches to discipline were characterized by: reaction to a student's misbehavior, use of punishment, emphasis on status variables, use of more autocratic leadership, and exclusionary practices. By contrast, SWPBS was exemplified by development of a caring environment, preventative and proactive practices, emphasis on alterable variables, inclusionary practices, and shared use of power (Christenson & Thurlow, 2004; Greene, 2001; Hergenhahn & Olson, 1997; Petras et. al., 2004).

### *Deductions*

These excerpts are the researcher's opinions based on literature review and analysis of this study's data. Excerpts of the study participants' interviews give voice to their contribution to the study.

#### *What factors influenced SWPBS discipline practices?*

Within this research, the participants' educational and discipline practices were influenced by formative experiences and by training experiences. The formative experiences were influenced in part by favorable recollections of former teachers and principals. "I just loved school as an elementary student and I always had a good rapport with my teachers and I just always looked up to them and admired them" (Lisa, 1). "For me I had a second grade teacher that just, I loved the year. It was exciting all the time. She brought a real joy to it. From that point on, that's all I ever wanted to do..." (Kathy, 1). When school leaders recollect their impressions of select former educators from decades earlier, it serves as a potent reminder of the power of education and of its

educators. This power structure - the interactions between students and educators - was a focus of this study.

The importance of PBS training was noted in this study. “It’s very worth the time and the effort. Training isn’t a big deal. You get a lot of great information, a lot of good contacts” (Julia, 6). Implications for training are noted later in this chapter.

#### *What was the climate/environment of schools using SWPBS?*

The climates in the three Ohio ES sites used in this study were characterized by openness, warmth, positive regard, and high aspirations. The participants in this study used the words, “culture, climate, atmosphere, feeling” to indicate the positive environment their staffs were creating. “I think that when you have a positive climate and a positive culture in your building and you have positive supports in place it just resonates with the community” (Fred, 5). “It’s the talking and communication that we give to one another and to the community that makes it grow. It’s our values. It’s who we are as a collective whole” (Karen, 8). ) “I think that you have to have good teachers who really care about the kids...coming here each day wanting not only to teach, but guide them socially, emotionally” (Fred, 8). “What I’ve been told is that you can sense just this belonging” (Karen, 5). “As we frame all of our discipline referrals, we talk about the action of the child, not the child himself and the choice” (Jim, 3). ”Well...handling behavior in a positive way creates just an overall positive atmosphere” (Lisa, 5).

#### *What was the goal of SWPBS practice?*

From this study, the goal of SWPBS practice was to develop self-discipline. Discipline was defined as a skill to be acquired and as a “teachable moment” (Kathy, 3).

“Discipline in my opinion should be learning, taking your mistake, learning from it, and applying it so that it doesn’t occur again” (Jim, 3). The short-term goal of SWPBS practice was to instill self-discipline. The long-term goal of SWPBS was to develop community. The application of positive motivation, pro-social values, and shared leadership inherent in SWPBS perceptions and practices is consistent with Senge’s concept of developing “systems citizenship” in “a learner-center, system’s-based educational system” (2006, p. 361). The interrelationship of SWPBS and community is discussed later in this chapter.

*What was the impact of SWPBS practices?*

In the three Ohio ES sites that were studied, SWPBS practices were related to perceived school safety, increased academic performance, and improved social skills.

*Safety.* “As for school safety and security - especially the playground and the bus and all that - I think the students kind of felt like they had a say in the creation of the rules” (Lisa, 5). “I think the students feel safer. The first thing is safety. And anytime we have an interaction where we need to re-teach, that’s what we say. ‘Were you being safe?’” (Karen, 5). “That [safety] has been great because with that consistency, the kids know that as they’re walking down the hall somebody is noticing them” (Kathy, 5).

School safety is more than the absence of violence – it is an educational right. A safe school limits the incidents of threat *and* curtails the incidence of violence and is one that allows for maximum growth and development of students. (Morrison et al., 2004, p. 259)

*Academics.* Academic performance was enhanced by effective discipline practices. “I think students will stay on task, more when they have these positives...” (Fred, 5). “We’re not going to take kids out of the instruction” (Fred, 5). “...any society expects their schools to prepare students to be successful...not just in the academic world, but in the work world” (Lisa, 7). “They [parents] expect that their kid is going to come into the door, have a great day at school; they’re going to learn” (Fred, 7).

“Well we truly believe, every staff member believes, that academics and behavior go hand and hand. And so if we focus in on the behavior aspect, academics increases. And if you want to look at an arbitrary number, our test scores are going up” (Karen, 5).

“Oh, that’s [academic learning] much more improved. We’re not dealing with as many behavior issues” (Kathy, 5). “Academic learning, our reading scores have gone up every year for the last two years that this has implemented, actually going on our third” (Jim, 5).

*Social.* “I think they [parents/society] expect us to teach them the social skills they need and problem-solving skills and respect of property and just our general expectations, or laws that we have as a society” (Karen, 7). “I see them following other students’ examples” (Lisa, 5). “Socially we can work things out...it’s great to tie it back into a model that the kids have come up with” (Fred, 5).

The connection of SWPBS to students’ social skills, academic progress, and safety and security was noted:

And having this [school-wide] PBS as we already talked in one of the other questions about how it has contributed positively to our school safety and security

and our academics and the social skills. That all goes in line with what our community is wanting... (Kathy, 7)

*What leadership was needed for SWPBS?*

Public education has operated on power based on authority, although authoritarian claims to power have been weakened in the last half century in society and in education. Understanding and using alternative sources of power is considered essential for school leaders (Fowler, 2004). This research contained evidence of transformational leadership with its characteristic shared power (Blase & Anderson, 1995; Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005). “The building leadership - you can’t help but make a point to understand that the building leadership has a lot to do with staff morale” (Lisa, 8). “I didn’t lead so much the meeting. I facilitated and listened to their ideas. And they [staff] came up with some great ideas” (Fred, 6). “The good things we have going on here are ... because of her [principal’s] leadership. She brings ideas to us. The staff is very unique that if she’s got an idea we usually say, ‘Well sure let’s run with it’” (Julia, 8).

*What was the relationship of SWPBS to community?*

The participants in this study indicated their respective communities had high standards for their school, including high academic achievement and an orderly learning environment. It was a pleasure to understand the reciprocity of this perspective; the schools in the study also highly valued their respective supportive communities. “They [parents] expected that their kid is going to come in to the door, have a great day at school. They’re going to learn” (Fred, 7).

“Society in general, I think, any society expects their schools to prepare students to be successful” (Lisa, 7). “I love that community aspect. So for me I think the core factor is just the sense of community that we have in this district” (Kathy, 8). “Our community culture here is that we want excellence... When you have something special like that and then you foster it and you guard it. I think that’s what this community here wants” (Jim, 7). “When they leave our building they’ll be going out into society. Society expects people to be respectful and to be problem-solvers and to be safe and to be responsible” (Kathy, 7)

“I think the core factor is just the sense of community that we have in this district” (Kathy, 8). “The sense of community is a broad phrase but that’s what I’ve experienced here. It’s the caring and compassion. It’s a part of our mission statement that we provide what we do in a caring and progressive environment” (Jim, 8).

#### *How was SWPBS implemented?*

Interviews with principals and teachers yielded suggestions for practitioners who may be considering or planning to implement SWPBS. The ideas that follow may assist in reducing the ambiguity inherent in a paradigm shift. Most respondents remarked about the necessity to plan and to secure staff commitment, the patience needed with the pace of change, and the persistence of effort that was required to affect change. Excerpts of the participants’ comments follow:

You have to have teacher buy in for that [SWPBS]. I remember with the Applefest program, I had this idea in my head of what it was going to look like. I remember at a staff meeting telling my idea. I got a couple looks and I could tell that, ‘Okay this was going to take more than just me saying this is how we should



do it.’ So we revamped it and I took a lot of their input. And basically facilitated it, I didn’t lead so much the meeting; I facilitated and listened to their ideas. They [staff] came up with some great ideas, so they’re the ones that have to facilitate the program in the classroom and give it to the students to be in charge of. They had a big stake in it. So [my advice is] getting teachers involved and not making the decision [independently of staff], and letting the teachers come up with it.

(Fred, 6)

No matter what system you have or what idea or plan you come up with, there’s going to be some things in it that need ironed out. The only thing that comes to mind is to be patient. It’s not all going to fall into place at once (Lisa, 6).

The important part [of SWPBS process] is talking. Talking first among staff members to see what expectations are. ‘What do we believe? What do we want?’ Take it slow. Do a lot of talking. Some people want the document, they want that referral form. They want that reward system. They want something. That’s not the important part; the important part is talking (Karen, 6).

It’s very worth the time and the effort. Training isn’t a big deal. You get a lot of great information, a lot of good contacts. It does take buy-in from the staff. That [buy-in] was probably the biggest thing that we were kind of holding our breath about. What would the staff say? There were four of us who were really pumped about SWPBS [after] coming back from a conference. Anytime you really want to change something, you’ve really got to get some good buy-in. School-wide positive behavior support gave us tools to help with that buy-in (Julia, 6).

Jim's comments reflect the leadership skills that are required for successful program implementation in the excerpts that follow:

The patience and the commitment just kind of keep coming back to me that it's [implementing SWPBS] a slow process. It's one that evolves. Well I'll tell you it going to take all the time of working with staff because it's a staff driven initiative. For this plan [SWPBS] to happen you have to get everybody involved and that's where the time is. You've got to have staff meetings. It isn't something you can put in [place] in a month. We had to start from the bottom: "What does this mean to us? What do we want to see? What are our rules?"

You've got to be very patient in allowing this [SWPBS] to form and to develop with your staff. You see, you don't know how well a program is doing until about the end of the third year. The more that you're able to get staff participating and involved in the process, the better the buy in will be. A lot of times people just say you've got to get buy in; my experience in this position is you get that by the participation.

Commitment is huge. I don't know that it's just my staff, but I think a lot in education will rush out and do some things, some new program, some grant, something and you do it for a year or two and then it's gone and you're on to the next program. The biggest selling thing for me to my staff is 'this isn't going anywhere' [SWPBS is viewed as a permanent change] -so you have to be committed that when you start this, no matter how it's going, we're going to keep going and we're going to keep massaging it and getting it to where it works for our building.

The nicest thing about this [SWPBS] is it's not really a canned program. Every building is going to be different. It's more of a philosophy. We've got to have that shared philosophy. What are we trying to do here? Are we trying to build kids up and encourage them to do the right thing and then praise that or do we want to just catch them doing everything wrong and criticize them for it and then punish them. It's just a philosophy. Getting your staff into that philosophy is probably a key component of it too. You have to have that shared positive behavior thought that "What do we want to accentuate and highlight here?" (Jim, 6)

Be realistic [regarding implementing SWPBS]. I don't want to say, 'don't set your expectations too high,' but know your staff. You have to go about it [SWPBS] the right way. It really takes a lot of planning. It really takes the core team to really have to talk it through and have our own little internal battles with one another on a safe playing field and come together united before you can go to the whole staff.

We had our core ideas and we took them to the staff. We had discussions with them at staff meetings and got their feedback. That's when we came to realize we had to compromise. We went to them with our compromises. I think that is when we got so much more buy in from them because they saw we were willing and we weren't dictating this is our program. They saw that we were really listening to what they were wanting and their concerns and their ideas. That's when the dialogue really began among the staff.

I would just reiterate that initial year was challenging. Our core team was very committed to the program. We were committed to making the changes for our building and that was key. The core group needs to be strong in that area. Go in with your eyes wide open. From this vantage point it has been, yes, it has been very worthwhile. (Kathy, 6)

### *Summary*

The early chapters of this research have reviewed historical, legal, and theoretical perspectives on school discipline and the paradigm shift toward preventative practices – notably PBS. Understanding how educational leaders perceive and practice SWPBS is imperative for safety, for academic progress, and for enhancement of student social skills. In this study, perspectives of Ohio school SWPBS practitioners were obtained from interviews, collection of documents and artifacts, and observations.

The question of study was: In Ohio school systems, what are the perceptions and practices of SWPBS leaders towards discipline? The key ideas and actions of SWPBS leadership teams identified in this study included: desiring to make a difference among students, envisioning more effective behavioral practices, collaborating with one another, valuing the community, posting of core rules prominently throughout the buildings, using a matrix to depict behavioral expectation throughout the school, recognizing students who exemplify expected behavior, communicating with staff regarding behavior expectations, and using office referral forms to record and respond to inappropriate student behavior.

The intent of this research was to find and promulgate educational leadership practices that foster effective school discipline, notably SWPBS. The interpretative

analysis linked the research to theoretical constructs and identified the essential attributes of SWPBS. The essential SWPBS leadership features were identified as first, acquiring and adapting perceptions, and then instilling and inspiring practices.

The final chapter, chapter 7, offers implications for practice, training, policy, and research.

## Chapter 7

### Discussion

The purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions and practices of Ohio leaders using SWPBS. The research was conducted with an opportunistic purposive sample in Ohio public school settings. Principals and teachers were interviewed, observations were recorded, and documents and artifacts were collected. The resultant data were analyzed in three ways: (a) descriptively by school site, (b) analytically within each site and among sites, and (c) interpretively. Major themes emerged that helped explain the interrelationship of practices and perceptions: first acquiring and adapting SWPBS perceptions, and next instilling and inspiring SWPBS practices.

#### *Research Question*

Student behavior concerns and educational efforts at discipline date back to colonial America. More recently, student and school safety issues have been additional challenges to school discipline efforts. Legislation has been enacted to maintain safe and orderly schools. Yet, endeavors to educate a diverse student population toward high academic standards have resulted in increased reliance on exclusionary discipline practices.

Theories (psychological, sociological, and organizational) impact the understanding of discipline. Theories tended to differ in terms of how a student's

behavior is acquired, with various constructs - such as rewards, values, power, and environment - offered to explain the process.

School systems have typically addressed problems reactively - that is, after an incident or problem occurs. A noticeable alternative is the systemic approach toward problem prevention. Primary prevention represents a paradigm shift: preemptively managing problems to prevent problem occurrence or prevalence. Educational practices that prevent the occurrence of problem behavior were the focus of this study.

Positive behavior support is a concept referring to prevention of student behavioral concerns. School-wide positive behavior support is characterized by use of data, application of incentives, teaching social skills, and teaching replacement behavior. School-wide PBS consists of empirically validated instructional practices that teach and reinforce pro-social behavior on a building-wide basis.

The purpose of this study was to examine SWPBS leader practices and perceptions regarding improvement of student behavior and to deduce how SWPBS practices may become more prevalent in Ohio schools. Understanding how educational leaders perceive and practice SWPBS is imperative for student and school safety, academic progress, and improved social skills. The successes of applied behavior practices have implications for school leaders who are relying on reactive discipline approaches. These practitioners' contributions from this study have the potential for accelerating the system change process for school leaders looking to implement proactive discipline programs.

The research question of this study was: In Ohio school systems, what are the perceptions and practices of SWPBS leaders towards discipline? Evidence of SWPBS in

several of Ohio's high-achieving school districts was collected and analyzed. The role of school leaders in implementing SWPBS was explored and the process was interpreted.

### *Methods*

Finding and promulgating educational leadership perceptions and practices that foster effective school discipline was the quest of this research. These social abstractions (discipline and educational leadership) were clarified through the perceptions of those implementing the practices, particularly the principals and teachers interviewed for the study. Qualitative research was well-suited to foster meaning, define context, identify unexpected phenomena, clarify processes, and develop causal explanations (Maxwell, 2005).

The sample was comprised of three elementary school sites representing three of the nine district typologies in Ohio. Data pertaining to SWPBS were collected from each site in the form of interviews, observation, documents and artifacts.

### *Analyses*

The interviews with teachers and principals resulted in rich and abundant data that were analyzed in three ways: descriptive analysis, within- and among-site analyses, and interpretive analysis.

Each elementary school site – Applefest ES, Blueberry ES, and Cherry Hill ES – was described in the following manner: (a) physical description of the neighborhood and the elementary building, (b) narratives derived from interviews of principal and teacher, (c) observation of SWPBS practice, (d) data from documents and artifacts, and (e) personal journal fieldnotes. The physical description of the setting provided a context for



the participants' stories. The observations of practices and the review of documents and artifacts contributed additional descriptive information. The personal journal fieldnotes were included to increase the study trustworthiness. The descriptive analysis permitted the reader to deduce conclusions regarding SWPBS perceptions and practices while the comparative analyses and interpretive analysis superimposed structures of organization upon the data.

The comparative analyses of SWPBS perceptions and practices were performed within-site and among-sites. The within-site analyses extracted the consistencies between the teacher and the principal in each of the three elementary sites. The among-site analysis found SWPBS perceptions and practices common to all sites. The SWPBS perceptions of the school leaders – the teachers and the principals interviewed for this study - included desiring to make a difference among students, envisioning more effective behavioral practices, and valuing the community. The SWPBS practices of the school leaders interviewed for this research included posting of core rules prominently throughout the buildings, using a matrix to depict behavioral expectation throughout the school, giving reward tickets to students who exemplify expected behavior, collaborating with one another, communicating with staff regarding behavior expectations, and using office referral forms to record and respond to inappropriate student behavior.

The final analytical structure imposed on the data was interpretation. The interpretative analysis linked the research to theoretical constructs and identified the four essential themes of this study: acquiring and adapting perceptions and instilling and inspiring practices. School-wide positive behavior support perceptions appeared to be acquired through formative experiences and through SWPBS training. These acquired

ideas were then adapted to the specific school culture through collaborative discussions with staff. The SWPBS practices were instilled through consistent school-wide practices that emphasize problem prevention. The SWPBS practices appeared to inspire confidence that set the stage for future positive approaches to discipline.

### *Implications*

#### *Implications for Practice*

*Educational practice.* Interviews with principals and teachers yielded suggestions for practitioners who may be considering or planning to implement SWPBS. Most respondents remarked about the necessity to plan and to secure staff commitment, the patience needed with the pace of change, and the persistence of effort that was required to affect change. In essence, the perceptions that are favorable toward SWPBS appeared to be acquired through formative experiences and through formal SWPBS trainings. These perceptions were adapted through collaborative discussions among staff. Through congruent practices, Positive behavior support was instilled on a school-wide basis. Finally, the effectiveness of these practices inspired future SWPBS practice.

I think that this building is made up of individuals that care about kids, care about their job, care about the community, and really will do anything in their power to make it happen. And I think that's where we start. (Karen, 8)

*Training.* When scheduling training conferences, it may be wise to heed the advice of busy school administrators who indicated that multiple notices and invitations were effective. "If something crosses my desk several times then I sort of take notice.

The first time it's casual, the second time it's interest, the third time then I think that we should act upon it" (Karen, 2). "Probably about the third time [I received notice of PBS training] I really looked at it a little bit more seriously" (Jim, 2).

*Legislation.* Policies toward discipline have been largely reactive and may have corresponding values rooted in self-interest (economic interests and power) and economy (efficiency and economic growth). By contrast, school leaders using proactive discipline practices, notably SWPBS, seemed to place a premium on the democratic values (liberty, equality, and fraternity) and the general social values (order and individualism) (Fowler, 2004). Future legislation may foster preventative practices when the democratic and social values are favored. These values are summarized in Karen's comments:

I think behaviorally they [parents] expect us to teach the children the difference between right and wrong. I think they expect us to teach them the social skills they need and problem-solving skills and respect of property and just our general expectations, or laws that we have as a society. (Karen, 7)

### *Implications for Research*

*Scope.* This research was limited to three elementary sites representing three of the nine demographic categories of Ohio's school districts. Research efforts may be directed toward broadening the understanding SWPBS practices and perceptions by studying secondary educational settings: middle school/junior high and high school settings. Research may also be conducted in elementary buildings in Ohio districts with varying demographic categories. Comparisons of values between SWPBS and non-SWPBS educators could be researched to better understand the role of values in resulting

discipline practices. Comparisons of leadership perceptions and practices between SWPBS and non-SWPBS administrators could be studied to understand what specific shifts are most critical to changing discipline practices.

*Appreciative Inquiry.* Trying to study effective educational practice is a noble effort according to Fullen, “It is one of life’s great ironies: schools are in the business of teaching and learning, yet they are terrible at learning from each other. If they ever discover how to do this, their future is assured” (2001, pp. 92-93). Using an Appreciative Inquiry methodology proved to be a very positive approach to structuring interviews and may offer other researchers a productive avenue of inquiry.

### *Reflections*

Several educational leaders have advanced the cause of SWPBS by sharing their perceptions and practices. These leaders have made a paradigm shift from reactive practices to preventative practices. They are reaping the rewards of motivated students and staff, high academic achievement, orderly learning environments, positive interactions, reduction in office referrals, and positive relationships with parents and community.

Ultimately, schooling is comprised of human interactions guided toward education. How educators and students interact and what constitutes an education are based on deeply held beliefs. These perceptions appear to be acquired through mentors and through explicit skill training. These attitudes are laden with values that determine how one will share power with others. “Schooling plays an important role in teaching and

legitimizing a society's ideology" (Tozer, Senese, Violas, & Tozer, 2006, p. 10).

Discipline, then, is the interplay of values and power.

Policies impacting discipline, particularly ZTP, have resulted in increased exclusionary practices (Black, 2004, Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997). This suggests that the value of order is in conflict with the value of equality. Punishment and exclusionary practices are more cost-effective practices which suggest that ZTP places a premium on the value of efficiency at the cost of the value of quality. Zero-tolerance policy can be characterized by the premium placed on the values of order and economy. There are effective positive, research-based alternatives to exclusionary discipline practices. School-wide positive behavior support appeared to place a premium on the democratic values (liberty, equality, and fraternity) and the general social values (order and individualism) (Fowler, 2004).

The time and the effort required to implement SWPBS are no excuse. Yes, the change is going to take resolve. It requires relinquishing ineffective practices that are prevalent and popular. Current legislation, particularly ZTP, appears to favor these more traditional, restrictive, and reactive approaches to discipline. There are effective positive, research-based alternatives to exclusionary discipline practices.

Reforming school structures alone will not lead to substantive differences, however, if such changes are not also accompanied by profound changes in how we as educators think about our students; that is, what we believe they deserve and are capable of achieving. (Nieto, 1999, p. 379)

Policies and practices, however well designed, are not enough; we must also change perception. The perceptions of leaders using SWPBS were characterized by

positive beliefs and by social and democratic values. The actions of SWPBS leaders were consistent with sharing power and authority. The key component to implementing more effective discipline practices is teaching; teaching behavior the way any other skill is taught. Collaboration also appeared essential to the effective SWPBS implementation. Finding kindred spirits who view more proactive approaches to discipline as desirable is vital.

Our educational discipline practices not only influence the interactions and the climate within the building, but set a trajectory of attitudes and actions far into the future. The resultant SWPBS climates in this study were characterized by openness, warmth, positive regard, and high aspirations. The participants in this study believed that parents expect learning to occur in a caring, nurturing school environment. Creating this climate through SWPBS practices resulted in a safer, more orderly learning setting. The positive environment was also conducive to the development and refinement of social and citizenship skills. Schools reflected as well as enlightened the community. The values of the community were distilled into basic concepts that were explicitly taught to students. In turn, participants hypothesized these skills will become part of the community as students grow into adult citizens.

Consistent with appreciative inquiry's theory of affirmative organization, this study has implied that schools are "made and imagined" (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2005, p. 18). Through imagining and implementing more positive discipline practices, educators have the potential for creating a culture of caring; the impact extends beyond the school to the community and into the future.

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## Appendices

## Appendix A

### PBS Participant Informed Consent



Educational Foundations & Leadership Dept.  
Gillham Hall  
The University of Toledo  
2801 W.Bancroft St.  
Toledo, OH 43606-3390  
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## ADULT RESEARCH SUBJECT - INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Perspectives and Practices of Ohio School Leaders using Positive Behavior Supports

**Principal Investigator:** Barbara Bleyaert, Ed.D. – University of Toledo, 419-530-2621  
**Co-Investigator:** Kristine Siesel Fauver – University of Toledo, 419-308-7667

**Purpose:** You are invited to participate in the research project entitled, Perspectives and Practices of Ohio School Leaders using Positive Behavior Supports (PBS), which is being conducted at the University of Toledo under the direction of Barbara Bleyaert and co-investigator Kristine Siesel Fauver. The purpose of this study is to understand the perspectives of public school leaders who are using PBS. The study will (1) identify the practices and perspectives of Ohio school leaders using PBS, and (2) ultimately assist educational leaders and practitioners in adapting PBS practices to various system settings and student needs.

**Description of Procedures:** This research will take place in 2007-08 academic year in Ohio public schools using PBS. There are three parts to the research. In the first part, you will be asked to give a brief tour of your school campus to the researcher. Next, you are invited to supply any pertinent documents related to your school's implementation of PBS. Third, you are asked to participate in an interview about your perspective on PBS practices. Each of the activities may take about an hour. You may choose to take part in any or all parts of this research. If, at any time you do not want to participate, you are free to quit the project.

Your participation will take about 3 hours at one visit. Photography of site, written notes, and audio recording of interview are to be used.

Permission to record: Will you permit the researcher to audio-record the interview?	
YES	NO
<hr/>	
Initial Here	
Permission to use fieldnotes as data: Will you permit the notes taken by the researcher during research activity to be used as project data?	
YES	NO
<hr/>	
Initial Here	
Permission to take photos: Will you permit photos taken of school premises to be used as project data and included in presentation or publication?	
YES	NO
<hr/>	
Initial Here	

After you have completed your participation, the research team will debrief you about the data, theory and research area under study and answer any questions you may have about the research.

**Potential Risks:** There are minimal risks to participation in this study, including loss of confidentiality. The risks are comparable to those encountered in everyday life. You will be sharing your views and experiences with the researcher. Confidentiality of your identity will be maintained. Any written descriptions of this research will be made with pretend names of individuals, as well as school. If you feel upset or anxious or do not want to participate for any reason, you may stop at any time.

**Potential Benefits:** The only direct benefit to you if you participate in this research may be that you will learn about how experiments are run and may learn more about PBS. Others may benefit by learning about the results of this research.

**Confidentiality:** The researchers will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you provided this information, or what that information is. The consent forms with signatures will be kept separate from responses, which will not include names and which will be presented to others only when combined with other responses. Although we will make every effort to protect your confidentiality, there is a low risk that this might be breached.

**Voluntary Participation:** Your refusal to participate in this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled and will not affect your relationship with The University of Toledo or any of your classes. In addition, you may discontinue participation at any time without any penalty or loss of benefits.

**Contact Information:** Before you decide to accept this invitation to take part in this study, you may ask any questions that you might have. If you have any questions at any time before, during or after your participation or experience any physical or psychological distress as a result of this research, you should contact a member of the research team Barbara Bleyaert, Ed.D. – University of Toledo, 419-530-2621 or co-researcher, Kristine Siesel Fauver – University of Toledo, 419-308-7667.

If you have questions beyond those answered by the research team or your rights as a research subject or research-related injuries, please feel free to contact the Chairperson of the SBE Institutional Review Board, Dr. Barbara Chesney, in the Office of Research on the main campus at (419) 530-2844.

Before you sign this form, please ask any questions on any aspect of this study that is unclear to you. You may take as much time as necessary to think it over.

### **SIGNATURE SECTION – Please read carefully**

You are making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above, you have had all your questions answered, and you have decided to take part in this research.

The date you sign this document to enroll in this study, that is, today's date must fall between the dates indicated at the bottom of the page.



Name of Subject (please print)	Signature	Date
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Name of Person Obtaining Consent	Signature	Date
----------------------------------	-----------	------

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TOLEDO**  
**SOCIAL, BEHAVIORAL & EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**

The research project described in this consent form and the form itself have been reviewed and approved by the University of Toledo Social, Behavioral & Educational Review Board (SBE IRB) for the period of time specified below.

SBE IRB # : 105843

Approved Number of Subjects: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Barbara Chesney, Ph.D., Chair  
UT Social Behavioral & Educational IRB

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix B  
Interview Protocol

1. What first attracted you to your work, to your profession? What were your initial impressions? What excited you?
2. Next, let's discuss PBS. How did SWPBS come to be implemented in your school?
3. Think over the last month or two and recall the last time you did something you consider especially effective in dealing with a discipline problem. What did the student(s) do? What did you do?
4. With the need for school personnel to balance a lot of demands at once, how have SWPBS practices affected that balance?
5. In what way(s) has PBS contributed to: school safety and security? Academic learning? Students' social skills?
6. For leaders considering SWPBS, what would you advise?
7. In your view, what are the community and societal expectations of \_\_\_\_ School for the future?
8. What is the *core factor* that gives vitality and life to this school – the one thing without which this place would just not be the same?
9. What three wishes do you have for this school – things that would enable it to become even more vibrant and truly the sort of place where great teaching and learning takes place on a daily basis?
10. Is there anything you wish to add or expand upon?

Appendix C  
Major Themes

