

SECONDARY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTIONS AND  
OPINIONS REGARDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF POSITIVE  
BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS (PBIS)

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By  
Lisa Chaves  
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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

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Lisa Chaves

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Dr. John Borba  
Professor of School Administration

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Date

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Dr. Anthony Johnson  
Associate Professor of School Administration

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Date

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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my husband, Joe, who has been a constant source of support and encouragement throughout this journey providing balance to our family. I am eternally grateful for your love and constant support.

I also dedicate this work to my children, Alyssa, Joe, and Lucas, their love and support gave me strength and courage to complete my educational journey. The three of you are the greatest blessings of my life.

The final dedication of this work is to my parents, Franklin and Pat Rego, and mother and father-in-law, Francisco and Laurinda Chaves, who have always loved me unconditionally, encouraged me to continue to move forward, and whose examples have taught me to work hard for the things that I aspire to achieve.

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## ABSTRACT

Student behavior continues to be a significant concern among administrators and teachers. Traditional suspension and expulsion practices have failed to reduce negative behavior and prevent discriminatory practices. This study investigated secondary administrators' perceptions and opinions regarding the implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Participants were interviewed individually using questions developed by this researcher relating to experiences and perceptions of high school administrators regarding the implementation of PBIS. Common themes that were identified through the analysis of the interview data included teacher resistance during the transition from zero tolerance to the implementation of PBIS, integration of campus intervention and counseling programs, the acknowledgement of less student offenses including changes that address positive student behavior due to PBIS teaching strategies, and the need to support staff by offering more professional development.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

#### **Background of the Study**

Disruptive school behavior is a continuing concern among parents, teachers and administrators. Many schools in the United States adopted zero tolerance policies in the 1990s, which led to substantial increases in out of school suspensions and expulsions (Wald & Losen, 2003). Zero-tolerance policies in the United States became widespread in 1994, after federal legislation required states to suspend and expel students from school for the following offenses: possession and use of weapons, alcohol, drugs, tobacco and over-the-counter medications; fighting; threatening other students or teachers; and any behavior considered disruptive. Clearly, there was hope in the United States that the increased surveillance and punishment associated with zero tolerance would send a strong message that would deter violence, crime, and disruption in schools (Skiba, 2014).

Zero tolerance policies required school officials to hand down specific, consistent, and harsh punishment. Research has shown that zero tolerance policies can lead to harmful effects on individuals. Some of the negative outcomes of these policies are racial disparities, higher rates of repeat offenses, academic regression, and an increase in the dropout rate. The consequences of inappropriate behavior did not include rehabilitative or supportive services to help students change their behavior in positive ways. Educators and lawmakers looked to alternative methods to school

discipline. Consequently, several restorative justice based programs have been established and implemented (Maxime, 2018).

Restorative practices, are designed to build a sense of school community and resolve conflict by repairing harm and restoring positive relationships, instead of assigning blame and dispensing punishment. These practices provide a framework for building community and responding to challenging behavior through authentic dialogue, coming to an understanding, and making things right. Schools that use restorative practices must have flexibility in school policies and practices to build healthy relationships between educators and students (Porter, 2007).

One restorative justice based program is Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) which is a proactive approach to establishing the behavioral supports and social culture needed for all students in a school to achieve social, emotional and academic success (Skiba & Sprague, 2008). The goal is to enhance the capacity of schools, individuals, families, and communities. Under PBIS, schools seek to consistently implement policies and procedures that emphasize proactive, instructive, and restorative approaches through setting consistent standards, clearly communicating and modeling expectations at every opportunity, while recognizing appropriate behaviors. These practices are implemented throughout the school both inside and outside of the classroom. All staff have an important role in helping students achieve outcomes by guiding them to choose more effective, efficient, and desirable actions (Doolittle, Horner, Bradley, Sugai, & Vincent, 2007).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Student behavior continues to be a significant concern among administrators and teachers. Traditional suspension and expulsion practices have failed to reduce negative behavior and prevent discriminatory practices. Therefore, administrators are looking for effective, practical alternatives to suspension and expulsion (Skiba & Sprague, 2008). PBIS may offer a positive alternative to zero tolerance and provide for a more effective school learning environment.

### **Research Questions**

- R1. What are the experiences of high school administrators regarding the transition from zero tolerance to the implementation of PBIS?
- R2. What are the benefits of PBIS in a high school environment?
- R3. What are the limitations of PBIS and how may they be addressed?

### **Significance of Study**

The purpose of this study is to determine the perceptions and opinions of high school administrators regarding the implementation of PBIS. This study may reveal the benefits and challenges of the implementation process. Also, information gained from this study may be useful to administrators and teachers who wish to enhance the effectiveness of their PBIS program or are considering the implementation of PBIS or similar programs.

### **Limitations**

This study is limited to three high school administrators, who deal with disciplinary behavior at their respective school sites located in the San Joaquin Valley

of California. This researcher will gather administrators' perceptions regarding the elimination of zero tolerance policies and the implementation of PBIS. In addition, the three administrators have at least five years of administrative experience. Their perceptions will not be assumed to be representative of all administrators.

### **Definition of Terms**

Definitions of the following terms have been included to provide clarity and understanding for the reader:

*Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)*: A proactive approach to establishing behavioral supports and social culture. It is based on an implementation framework for maximizing the selection and use of evidence-based prevention and intervention practices along a multi-tiered continuum that supports the academic, social, emotional, and behavioral competence of all students. This program is based on a three tiered system. The first tier, Tier 1 is universal, focused on school-wide practices for all students, creating a positive school climate. The next tier, Tier 2 is targeted, centering on strategic, small group interventions, through meetings and procedural guides. The final tier, Tier 3 is intensive, providing individual interventions (OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2019).

*Restorative Justice*: A theory of justice that emphasizes repairing the harm caused by criminal behavior. It is best accomplished through cooperative processes that allow all willing stakeholders to meet, although other approaches are available

when that is impossible. This can lead to transformation of people, relationships and communities (Centre for Justice & Reconciliation, 2019).

*Zero Tolerance (ZT)*: A policy that requires school officials to hand down specific, consistent, and harsh punishment, usually suspension or expulsion, when students break certain rules. Under zero tolerance policies, harsh punishment applies regardless of the circumstances (Maxime, 2018).

### **Summary**

Zero tolerance policies were used in schools without success, to address inappropriate student behavior for two decades. Consequently, restorative justice policies have been used in schools, as an alternative to zero tolerance for nearly a decade. This study will determine perceptions and opinions of high school administrators regarding a restorative justice based program, Positive Behavioral Supports and Interventions. Chapter 2 will present a review of the literature that is relevant to the topic of this study.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study is to determine the perceptions and opinions of high school administrators regarding the implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). In this chapter, an examination of the evolution of restorative justice will be discussed, effective models of proactive PBIS programs will be reviewed and a comprehensive summary of research studies on PBIS will be presented.

Zero tolerance policies were introduced to the education system during the 1980s as a way to address drug abuse and violence in schools. In 1994, President Clinton signed the Gun Free Schools Act of 1993, which required schools to implement policies that would require expulsion for weapons possession at school. This requirement was tied to schools receiving federal funding under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Zero Tolerance rules only applied to weapons, but school systems across the United States expanded policies to cover other serious infractions that included substance abuse, fighting, and overall defiance of authority (Stahl, 2016).

Policymakers and educators, among others, began to question the harsh discipline policies and practices that were in place in the first decade of the 21st century. Research shows that the reliance on punitive school discipline such as suspensions and expulsions, deprive students from instructional time. Also, the

policies were discriminatory among specific groups, including minorities and students with disabilities (Heilbrun, Cornell, & Lovegrove, 2015). In 2011, after reviewing research that showed expulsions and suspensions increase students' chances of being sentenced to the juvenile justice system, the Department of Justice launched the Supportive School Discipline Initiative to educate administrators and teachers about alternative disciplinary practices (Fink, 2013).

Sustained high levels of concern, controversy, and discussion led to restorative practice models to improve classroom behavior and schoolwide discipline. Positive Behavior Support (PBS) evolved as the forerunner to assist and extend comprehensive interventions for individuals with severe behavior and developmental disabilities (Sugai & Horner, 2002). PBS was first used in response to the 1997 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and has held a unique place in special education law since Congress amended IDEA in 1997. PBS is now referred to as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and is the only approach to addressing behavior that is specifically mentioned in the law. This emphasis on using functional assessment and positive approaches to encourage good behavior remains in the current version of the law as amended in 2004 (National Education Association, 2014). PBS has since shifted to a "school-wide" system that applies to all students. The expansion and evolution of PBIS were accelerated by significant increases in suspensions and expulsions of minority students, particularly, African American and Hispanic.

Strong recommendations for a shift toward more preventative and positive approaches for addressing inappropriate behavior were made by numerous educators and researchers (Elliott, Hamburg, & Williams, 1998). PBIS is a way of delivering systems and practices to enhance academic and behavior outcomes for all students. Two essential components of PBIS focus on the whole school as the unit of intervention intensity (Biglan, 1995; Mayer, 1995; Mayer & Butterworth, 1979) and the simultaneous development of interventions tied to at least three tiers of support intensity (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). The tiers include (1) universal protection for all; (2) targeted prevention for some; and (3) intensive, individualized prevention for few. For the first tier, Universal Protection for all, this support serves as the foundation for behavior and academics. Schools provide these universal supports to all students. For most students, the core program gives them what they need to be successful and helps to prevent future problems. The second tier, which is Targeted Prevention for some, is a level of support that focuses on improving specific skill deficits students may have. At this tier, schools may group students related to their targeted needs. These groups are set up to provide opportunities for practice and feedback on skills while efficiently providing an intervention at the same time. Prior to intervention, students may need an assessment to identify the level of support and skills that need to be addressed. The goal of Tier 2 supports is to help students develop the skills they need to benefit from core programs at school. The final level of support is Tier 3, the most intensive level. The supports are individualized based on the needs of the students and require the development of specific interventions. At this level, schools typically rely

on formal assessments to determine a student's need and to develop an individualized support plan. These plans often include goals related to both academics as well as behavior support. Practices are evidence based, organized along a tiered continuum beginning with strong universal support and followed by intensified interventions matched to student needs. Data are collected and used to screen, monitor, and assess student progress.

A simple call for a more preventative approach is unlikely to change prevailing reactive practices, and no single intervention or approach will solve the mammoth social issues facing educators today. Strong recommendations for a shift toward more preventative and positive approaches for addressing problem behavior have been made by numerous educators and researchers (Elliott et al., 1998). PBIS is a way of delivering practices and systems to enhance academic and behavior outcomes for all students and their families. The features, processes, and structures of an effective, proactive, and comprehensive response have been studied. From the studies, two themes emerged and define PBIS as a focus on the whole-school as the unit of intervention and the simultaneous development of interventions tied to at least three tiers of support intensity (Biglan, 1995; Mayer, 1995; Mayer & Butterworth, 1979).

PBIS has evolved into a process for supporting positive social and educational outcomes for all students. It is not a static curriculum and does not look the same in every behavior intervention plan, classroom, school, family, and community. PBIS is

for all students with or without disabilities, their families, and educators (Sugai & Horner, 2002).

### **Model Programs**

The California PBIS Coalition oversees a statewide effort to implement a recognition system to acknowledge schools for implementing PBIS with fidelity to the national framework. According to their respective levels of implementation, schools are given the opportunity to apply for Bronze, Silver, Gold, or Platinum. Remarkably, for the 2018-2019 school year, 755 schools were designated as Silver and 305 received Gold. Three of the acknowledged schools came from the Placentia-Yorba Linda Unified School District (PYLUSD). The California PBIS Coalition recognized the three schools for their excellence in implementing a robust PBIS program (PYLUSD, 2019).

Rose Drive Elementary School earned the Gold implementation award, while Mabel Paine Elementary School and Esperanza High School both earned Silver. Rose Drive Elementary School takes special care in creating a positive, caring, and collaborative environment for all students through its PBIS program. They embrace, “The Roadrunner Way,” and the core values of safety, there and ready, acting responsibly, respectfully, and showing compassion – otherwise known as STARS. Rose Drive students of all ages who practice these core values earn STARS tickets to exchange for various rewards and experiences. Rose Drive’s Principal, Kathleen Escaleras-Nappi shared, “Our culture of caring is making a big impact on student achievement and success” (PYLUSD, 2019, para. 5).

The other school receiving recognition in PYLUSD, is Mabel Paine Elementary School. Their motto is “Mindful Mustangs,” doing the right thing, in the right place, at the right time. By exhibiting the positive behaviors outlined in the school’s PBIS matrix, students earn Mustang Money to spend on incentives both in the classroom and around campus. The principal of this site also holds a Behavior Expectations Assembly for each grade-level at the beginning of the school year. Principal Carmona of Mabel Paine, stated that staff members worked collaboratively with families and students to develop their PBIS system and the results in one year have shown social-emotional and behavioral growth because of these efforts (PYLUSD, 2019).

Third, Esperanza High School’s PBIS program which is centered on the concept of “Aztec Pride,” encourages students to be positive, responsible, innovative, determined, and engaged citizens. Students are reminded of this notion through branded cardinal and gold Aztec PRIDE signage on the school’s buildings and in every classroom and on posters that define expected behaviors in all locations on campus. Through the school’s 5-Star student electronic system, students earn cards for getting involved on campus and demonstrating Aztec PRIDE behavior. The PRIDE cards may be traded for prizes or tickets to school events, and are awarded to students on a daily basis. “Receiving this high honor from the California PBIS Coalition is a testament to Esperanza High School’s commitment to create a school culture that supports the positive development of all students on our campus,” noted Principal Gina Aguilar (PYLUSD, 2019, para. 9).

Another school acknowledged for implementation of PBIS for positive change toward school culture is Fairview Elementary School, which received the Georgia Department of Education's (GaDOE) highest recognition for its work with PBIS. The state of Georgia has four recognition levels for PBIS Schools, including Installing, Emerging, Operational, and Distinguished. Fairview Elementary attained the "Distinguished" level. Dr. LaMoyne Brunson, principal of Fairview Elementary School, stated the following:

Our work with PBIS has really influenced our school climate in a positive way. PBIS is the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports framework through which we teach all students to be safe, organized, accountable, and respectful. We use the word "SOAR" to remind everyone of our expectations every day. Our work with PBIS and SOAR has dramatically decreased the number of office discipline referrals and out-of-school suspensions in recent years; but more importantly, it has developed a new way of thinking about student discipline and how to teach students about being responsible for their actions. Our goal is to have a safe and happy school for our students, and to understand that our work will impact their success later in life. (Newton County Schools, 2018, para. 3)

Samantha Fuhrey, the Superintendent of Newton County School System, stated that "PBIS is changing the way we think of school culture and climate and the framework enables us to positively impact our students" (Newton County Schools, 2018, para. 5). The Newton County School system has seen dramatic decreases in

student disciplinary incidents over the past few years. The leadership team plans to keep making efforts to continue this trend (Newton County Schools, 2018).

### **Research Studies**

Knowles (2014) conducted a study on the effects of positive interventions and supports on middle school student achievement. The study's intent was to determine the impact Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) programs have on student achievement. Two schools were chosen based on the similarity of student demographics. Since both schools are from the same district, they received relatively similar supports and resources. The study took place in a county located in Central Virginia.

Participants were from two middle schools located in a large, suburban county school system of 60,000 students. The total study population included 280 students that had participated in PBIS and 282 students that had not participated. Students' ages ranged from twelve to fifteen (Knowles, 2014).

The Virginia English Reading Standards of Learning assessment was used to collect academic achievement data. A t-test was used to analyze the data at the significance level of .05 (Knowles, 2014).

The statistical analysis revealed that there was no statistically significant difference between eighth grade assessment scores at the school where PBIS was implemented versus the school that did not implement a PBIS program (Knowles, 2014).

Amegin (2018) conducted a study on teacher perceptions of PBIS at the middle school level. The purpose of this study was to determine teacher perceptions regarding the effects of the PBIS program. The study involved 50 teachers at an intermediate school located in the foothills of Southern California.

A mixed methods approach was used. A teacher perception survey was distributed to all staff members at a staff meeting and 41 surveys were completed. Follow up interviews were set up on a volunteer basis which consisted of 12 teachers. The following questions were formulated as a focus of the research (Amegin, 2018):

1. What are teacher perceptions regarding PBIS implementation?
2. How do teacher perceptions change during PBIS implementation?
3. How can school leaders create more buy-in during implementation of a new PBIS program?

Once surveys were completed and collected, the researcher created a Google form to record results and manually input responses. The Google form allowed for responses to be gathered and analyzed using graphs, charts, and downloaded into an Excel sheet for further data analysis. Frequencies of responses were analyzed using summary scales, graphs, and charts (Amegin, 2018). Of the participants surveyed, 39% believed that they had a good understanding of PBIS and selected a 4 or a 5 on the rating scale. 37% were in the middle and chose a 3 out of the scale of 5, and ten teachers, or 24% indicating that they didn't feel to be very knowledgeable about PBIS at the time of the survey (Amegin, 2018).

The Excel sheet provided a survey method correlation analysis between these two variables, knowledge and effectiveness. This was done to see whether there was a correlation between teachers' perceived knowledge of PBIS and their belief that it would be effective. A correlation coefficient of 0.66 was found. This coefficient implies a moderate to strong positive correlation between teacher knowledge and perceived effectiveness of PBIS.

Interviews were audio-recorded, and then manually transcribed. The transcriptions were coded for themes. Three themes evolved from the analysis: people need administrative support; people need time and information; and people need to see it themselves. In the first theme, teachers indicated that administrators need to be consistent and fair throughout the implementation process and beyond. The second theme emphasized the need to have PBIS implemented in multiple modes, such as trainings to support the layers of the program and allow ample time to incorporate the levels of support with better expertise. The final theme that emerged is people need to see it themselves. The immediate results were so positive, there was a great deal of buy-in from the teachers (Amegin, 2018).

The first of the three focus questions regarding teachers' perceptions of PBIS showed that many teachers are in support of PBIS ideals, but were hesitant at first, due to the belief that it is just a public relations initiative. However, it was discovered that teacher perceptions change. This leads to the next question, "How do teachers' perceptions change during PBIS implementation?" Teacher interviews indicated that regardless of their initial perspectives, they grew to be more positive and supportive

of the program with time as they learned more. The last question focused on school leaders creating more buy-in during the implementation of a new PBIS program. School leaders recommend that it must be organic, and not seen as something they are being told to do. Administrators shared if teachers are made to feel included and given ownership when implementing a new program, there will be more buy-in (Amegin, 2018).

Martin (2013) conducted a study on teachers' perceptions of the PBIS program. The purpose of the study was to examine teachers' satisfaction level and perceptions of PBIS in their school. The study involved approximately 80 primary and intermediate teachers from two elementary schools, within a school district located in Southeastern Georgia.

Martin (2013) used a mixed methods approach through quantitative and qualitative measures. The researcher chose to administer a PBIS Staff Satisfaction survey using a 5-point Likert scale to rate statements from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The researcher interviewed eight teachers, based on the results of the survey. Four teachers were selected on the basis of being satisfied with PBIS and four on the basis of being dissatisfied or neutral. Prior to conducting the survey and interviews, permission from the school superintendent and each of the schools' principals were obtained. In addition, teachers were informed about the survey and interview process. The researcher and faculty advisor were the only people with access to the participants' information, which was kept confidential (Martin, 2013).

Each of the interviews were audio recorded. The researcher transcribed the audio recordings. The transcripts were analyzed repeatedly (Martin, 2013).

The PBIS survey results indicated that teachers' attitudes toward the behavior system were relatively satisfactory. Teachers' appear satisfied with their own actions regarding PBIS, such as teaching and modeling the expectations and rewarding students accordingly. Also, the system's short and long term student incentive plans received satisfactory ratings. Those that scored highly on the PBIS satisfaction survey, agreed that PBIS is a very structured, organized behavior system. However, other teachers were not satisfied with PBIS in terms of improving student behavior and did not think students displaying negative behavior were being punished appropriately. The main conclusions showed that all students should be motivated by incentives or rewards that are part of PBIS, teachers need administrative support in dealing with problem behavior and it is important to ensure consistency with the expectations of PBIS (Martin, 2013).

Duncan (2019) conducted a study on PBIS and restorative practices. The purpose of the study was to gain an understanding of how to successfully implement PBIS and restorative practices as an alternative to exclusionary approaches. The study was conducted in three different school districts in southwest Illinois.

The author selected six participants for the study. Of the six participants, three held the title of administrator and three were restorative coaches working at the middle or high school level. This qualitative study included interviews. The interview questions were piloted by other administrators to ensure that the questions were clear

and concise. Participants signed an agreement of consent. The questions asked in the interviews are listed below:

R1. How can I successfully implement PBIS and Restorative Practices as an alternative to exclusionary discipline?

R2. What do administrators view to be the most significant obstacles to successfully implement PBIS and Restorative Practices?

R3. Do administrators believe that PBIS and Restorative Practices benefit students more compared to exclusionary discipline?

The interviews were semi-structured and lasted 45 minutes each. The data were collected in a reflective journal (Duncan, 2019).

A thematic analysis of data identified common themes and patterns. The interview results were read over numerous times to identify commonalities. Open coding was used to identify themes. Implementation documents for PBIS and Restorative Practices were used to provide a baseline for the purpose of comparing the data gathered from interviews with recommended implementation practices (Duncan, 2019).

Six themes emerged from the data: (1) to effectively implement PBIS and Restorative Practices (RP), there must be support from district stakeholders (school board members, site and district administrators, and teachers); (2) stakeholder buy-in is an integral part to the implementation process; (3) parental support can increase the effectiveness of both PBIS and RP; (4) PBIS and RP are effective alternatives to exclusionary discipline; (5) schools see the most significant change in behavior when

PBIS and RP are intertwined together; and (6) PBIS and RP will not modify the behavior of every student. Results indicated that administrators believe that PBIS and RP are more beneficial than exclusionary discipline. Participants consistently felt that exclusionary discipline does not adequately address problems with student behavior and when used can lead to more negative behavior. Along with the themes that emerged, participants regrettably acknowledged that there would be students who require additional supports that PBIS and RP do not provide. Participants also recognized that there will be situations when schools have to exclude students due to their behavior (Duncan, 2019).

Warren (2018) conducted a study on teachers' perceptions of PBIS. The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' perceptions regarding the efficacy of a school-wide positive behavior support. This quantitative study took place in Illinois.

The author of this research distributed a survey with a Likert-type scale to 1,845 public school teachers in 45 school districts that were recognized by the Midwest PBIS Network in the 2015-2016 school year. Of the teachers surveyed, 387 responded answering all of the questions (Warren, 2018).

A t-test and an ANOVA were used to analyze the differences in perceptions in terms of gender, years of teaching experience, and grade levels. A t-test indicated that there was no significant difference in perceptions between female and male teachers. An ANOVA revealed a significant difference in perceptions between teachers who taught at the elementary level and teachers who taught at the middle or high school

level. Elementary teachers were more positive ( $F(2, 384) = 11.31, p < .0001$ ). Results from an ANOVA indicated that there was not a significant difference in perceptions on the basis of teaching experience (Warren, 2018).

From the interview data, three main themes were found. The first is that teachers reported positively about PBIS regarding their own actions. Second, participants do not believe that they received adequate training and provided with ongoing professional development. The third theme was that the PBIS system needs to be restructured, as it seems to target those students who normally behave and not reaching the disruptive students. According to the author, these trends indicate that teachers need more support from administration before the implementation of PBIS and also need to gather cooperation and support from families (Warren, 2018).

### **Summary**

This chapter presented a review of the literature that is pertinent to research on Professional Learning Communities (PLC). Chapter III will describe the methodology of this study including sample population, instrumentation, data collection, and qualitative analysis.

CHAPTER III  
METHODOLOGY

**Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions and opinions of high school administrators regarding the implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). The following chapter will present the sample population, research questions, instrumentation, data collection and analysis.

**Sample Population**

The participants in this qualitative study were administrators from three high schools located within a school district in California's Central Valley during the 2019-2020 academic year. The study used purposive sampling to select three administrators, one from each site, based on their years of experience at the secondary level and knowledge of PBIS. The participants' experience ranged from five years to 15 years as listed in Table 1. Participants' names were fictitious in order to protect their identity and ensure confidentiality.

Table 1

*Summary of Participant Specifics*

| Participant | School Site | Years of Administrative Experience |
|-------------|-------------|------------------------------------|
| Ben         | Site A      | 5                                  |
| Sam         | Site B      | 10                                 |
| Sandra      | Site C      | 15                                 |

### **Instrumentation and Data Collection**

This researcher conducted an interview with each participant. Interviews were scheduled and conducted through an Internet based video chat software (Zoom). Each interview was conducted individually to maintain confidentiality and a comfortable environment. Interview questions (see Appendix A) were developed by this researcher and then submitted to the thesis committee chair for approval. This researcher explained to the participants the purpose and intent of this study and obtained their permission to participate (see Appendix B). Consent forms were distributed to the three administrators for signatures and an interview date was arranged with each participant. Interview questions were designed to find answers to the following research questions:

- R1. What are the experiences of high school administrators regarding the transition from zero tolerance to the implementation of PBIS?
- R2. What are the benefits of PBIS in a high school environment?
- R3. What are the limitations of PBIS and how may they be addressed?

This researcher interviewed each participant for 30 minutes. To ensure responses were accurately recorded, this researcher audio recorded the participants' responses. Field notes were taken during the interviews to record other pertinent observations.

### **Data Analysis**

Audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed and coded upon completion of the interviews. The three participants received their respective copies

to verify the accuracy of their responses. The responses were analyzed through a color-coding process. The evidence provided from the interview responses and field notes were used to identify themes that address the three guiding research questions. References to each theme were noted by color. The findings were gathered and included in the results section of this study. The California State University, Stanislaus Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this research study and the methodology used (Protocol #2021-012, September 8, 2020). All information, including question responses, and audio recordings of the interview, were kept in a secure location on a password protected device. Only this researcher, and her faculty sponsor, had access to the data. Any hard copy documents such as consent forms, printouts, or documents that contain personal identifying information (PII) were stored securely in a locked file cabinet when not in use and handled only by this researcher. Three years after the completion of this study, all documents collected as evidence will be destroyed to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

### **Summary**

Chapter III presented the methodology which includes sample population, instrumentation, data collection and data analysis. Chapter IV will present a summary of the data collected in relation to each research question.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions and opinions of high school administrators regarding the implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). This researcher interviewed three administrators at the high school level in Central California to provide feedback on how they perceive the implementation and effectiveness of PBIS. This chapter provides a summary of the interviews as they relate to each research question.

#### **Interviews**

##### **Interview 1**

Ben is a secondary administrator with five years of administrative experience. Before working as an administrator, he taught at the secondary level for ten years. He has a single subject mathematics credential, an administrative services credential, and a master's degree in school administration. Ben is the school's administrative contact on the PBIS implementation team.

**What are the experiences of high school administrators regarding the transition from zero tolerance to the implementation of PBIS? (R1).** Ben received one year of PBIS training, supported by the district with a focus on the secondary level. He reported his experience of the transition from zero tolerance to PBIS as being rough when implemented due to push back from teachers. In order to address

teachers' concerns, he created more buy-in, by starting "Eagle" bills as a way to reward students for good behavior which could lead to a larger reward. He reported that student policies changed by approaching discipline differently; it became more teaching and training than punitive. Some of the changes included drug counseling, fewer suspension days with a restorative justice approach, supporting students by helping them understand their choice, and how to make a better decision if a similar situation should present itself in the future. Ben said PBIS interventions included after school study hall or campus intervention. Overall, Ben believes if the goal is to change behavior, there has to be consistency within how discipline is handled.

**What are the benefits of PBIS in a high school environment? (R2).** Ben reported that the climate of the school has changed dramatically; there are less fights on campus and less animosity between students and administrators. He also feels like behaviors that happened before PBIS still occur but the difference is the approach and the interventions that are put in place to help students understand the consequences of their behavior, therefore lessening reoccurrences. Ben said minor classroom behavior may have increased but major classroom behavior has decreased. Examples of minor classroom inappropriate behavior include lack of class preparation, and tardiness, while major issues consist of physical contact, threats, or inappropriate use of language. Ben stated that policies put in place help students stay in school allowing them to keep up with their academics. In addition, he said that PBIS has made some teachers more tolerant, allowing for improvement in academic achievement.

**What are the limitations of PBIS and how may they be addressed? (R3).**

Ben stated that the negative factors associated with PBIS are increased documentation for teachers and lack of funding for student rewards. Teachers are required to report each incident and the intervention that was implemented to address the inappropriate behavior, which cause some teachers to accept behavior from students without addressing it. Another negative factor Ben noted is that the reward system represents little value to students and does not motivate them to change their behavior.

Ben's advice for schools to make PBIS more effective is to take a targeted approach that requires teachers to use a common reward system to incentivize every student. He also believes more training and teacher collaboration is needed in order to make PBIS a teacher driven initiative.

**Interview 2**

Sam is a secondary administrator with ten years of administrative experience. He has an education specialist credential, administrative services credential, and a doctorate in education. He is one of the administrative contacts on the PBIS implementation team.

**What are the experiences of high school administrators regarding the transition from zero tolerance to the implementation of PBIS? (R1).** Sam went through one year of district supported PBIS training but noted he had used this approach in another district. He noted that for the administrators on campus, implementation of PBIS was embraced wholeheartedly. Sam said, although administrators were immediately ready for the change, some teachers resisted the

PBIS philosophy and there was not enough time to get the entire staff on board. Teacher buy-in was not as strong for all teacher groups. Sam felt that the implementation of this process caused him to be perceived as a counselor by students, teachers and parents. He said his job was no longer about always administering discipline.

Sam reported that student discipline policies changed by administration providing more counseling to students and becoming an additional place where students could voice their concerns and be heard. Another change in policies were suspension days; consequently, suspensions were less than the standard five days for major offenses or counseling and campus intervention were used in lieu of suspensions. He also stated that the student resolution process included working with the teacher, parent, and anyone else who supports restorative practices. Sam said one of the interventions used immediately was working with everyone involved. An example he provided, was an intervention following a fight that involved two students and their families who were invited to the school to resolve the situation. Other interventions included rewards for positive behavior, called PRIDE tickets, campus intervention (alternative for suspension) allowed students to have the ability to complete classwork along with being able to reflect on their behavior, using restorative practices. PRIDE tickets permitted all staff to reward students and allowed students the ability to enter in a raffle for many different prizes or the option to use the ticket as a homework pass. Sam shared that teachers expressed feeling supported by the office in respect to discipline. Sam stated that administration supported

teachers with the implementation of PBIS by sending teacher leaders to PBIS trainings and setting time aside for teachers to work together in order to make sense of how to implement it.

**What are the benefits of PBIS in a high school environment? (R2).** Sam shared that the climate at school changed in a positive way. Administration made a presence around campus; students knew administrators would be outside during passing periods and lunch and teachers and staff felt supported. Sam said that positivity was felt throughout all parts of campus. He credited this to campus intervention being implemented in a restorative way successfully and having dedicated time carved out for students in need through Link Crew, conflict mediation, and counseling. Sam noticed changes in classroom behavior and said PBIS reinforces good teaching strategies which allowed more time to teach and students to learn. He stated that PBIS can improve academic achievement. Sam believes at-risk, special education, and minority students get the most out of PBIS.

**What are the limitations of PBIS and how may they be addressed? (R3).** Sam stated a negative factor associated with PBIS is that some teachers feel that you should not reward kids for something they should already be doing. Another factor is time available to meet regarding the implementation. He said administrators were trained and some teachers were trained, but they needed more time set aside for everyone to come together as it was a slow implementation, not necessarily negative but he noted there is room for improvement. If they had more time and the ability to train all teachers, he would like to stagger internal PBIS training to include more

intense training for new teachers as well as connect them to a senior teacher as a mentor.

Sam stated that PBIS should be discussed more often in meetings, without exaggerating that it is better than it is. Also, Sam suggests more data analysis with staff, encouragement of teacher leaders on campus, and opportunities to bring more people into the fold. He also said, “Touch on the subject a lot, and report on successes; you do not have to force it, but you have to give opportunities to recognize those accomplishments and celebrate the PBIS victories.”

### **Interview 3**

Sandra is a secondary administrator with 15 years of experience. Prior to becoming a school leader, Sandra was a teacher in the area of special education at the secondary level. She holds an education specialist credential and an administrative services credential. She is on the PBIS team at her site as the administrative point of contact.

**What are the experiences of high school administrators regarding the transition from zero tolerance to the implementation of PBIS? (R1).** Sandra went through one year of district supported PBIS training. She stated that PBIS has been going on for at least five years. At the start of the implementation, she said PBIS was met with reluctance from teachers along with questions about why it was needed and what was needed to implement it. The response from teachers made the transition difficult. Sandra remembered policy changes that involved offenses with less punitive consequences. According to Sandra different interventions were implemented. One

intervention was having more conversations with students when they entered the office, such as counseling to work through a situation. Campus intervention was also implemented. Campus intervention was previously known as in school suspension; the difference is that it requires students to reflect on their behavior for a portion of time and provides an opportunity to complete their classwork. Sandra said that administrators supported teachers by allowing them an extra free period or making sure teachers involved had common schedules. Also, a teacher was selected to teach restorative practices to a small group of student ambassadors so they could work with student peers who needed intervention. She said this encouraged the teachers to support the PBIS plan.

**What are the benefits of PBIS in a high school environment? (R2).** Sandra stated that the school climate has changed dramatically since PBIS was implemented. She said the counseling department, teachers, and administrators all worked together to support the PBIS effort. They support students in crisis and receive referrals from teachers to alert them to the potential crisis before it happens. Teachers are responding to classroom behavior in a more proactive and positive way while some of the same classroom behaviors are still present. When asked if PBIS can improve academic achievement, she responded, “Absolutely one hundred percent.” Sandra stated that PBIS has allowed the adults in the room the ability to understand that troubled students experience something that causes them to act in inappropriate ways. She said that by having teachers be more tolerant, proactive and positive, students

feel that they belong, causing them to stay in class and have exposure to the curriculum, allowing for more positive academic outcomes.

**What are the limitations of PBIS and how may they be addressed? (R3).**

Sandra said that the one negative factor is identifying PBIS as a program, instead of just incorporating social justice strategies. Otherwise, it appears teachers have one more thing to do rather than following a discipline matrix and starting there. Sandra said her staff approached PBIS with the attitude of perceiving it as an ongoing practice. Sandra's advice to other schools is to not call PBIS anything. She believes starting off with goals or establishing an end goal should be used to implement strategies of PBIS. This approach will allow for administrators to continue to implement restorative justice ideas with teachers and staff without the formal name of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).

**Summary**

Chapter IV provided an analysis of the data collected in relation to each research question. Chapter V will provide a summary, themes, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER V  
DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

**Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions and opinions of high school administrators regarding the implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). This chapter summarizes the information from Chapter IV and identifies themes based on responses to the research questions. In addition, this researcher will provide implications of the research and recommendations for further study.

**Summary**

This researcher prepared three research questions: (1) what are the experiences of high school administrators regarding the transition from zero tolerance to the implementation of PBIS; (2) what are the benefits of PBIS in a high school environment; and (3) what are the limitations of PBIS and how may they be addressed? The following paragraphs will summarize the findings of the three interviews constructed from each research question.

**What Are the Experiences of High School Administrators Regarding the Transition From Zero Tolerance to the Implementation of PBIS? (R1)**

All of the administrators interviewed supported the movement from zero tolerance to the implementation of PBIS. Also, each had one year of district supported PBIS training. One interviewee said the administration at his site fully

embraced restorative practices and felt as though they were already moving in that direction prior to implementation. Two administrators stated that teachers did not have enough time to get on board. All three administrators experienced teachers feeling reluctant about the process of PBIS implementation.

One of the administrators felt that changes in student discipline policies, since the implementation of PBIS, left teachers feeling there was a lack of clarity with consequences. Two administrators stated staff are working toward understanding consequences of restorative practices. All three administrators agreed that the greatest transformation in student discipline policies is fewer suspension days as a consequence to inappropriate student behavior.

Campus intervention was implemented per PBIS at the high schools of all three participants. Each high school has an in-school intervention room with a credentialed, PBIS trained teacher, as a consequence to address student behavior without removing the student from campus. Each high school followed a routine that addressed the behavior of students including a reflection piece, while allowing them an opportunity to complete their classwork in the alternative setting. One administrator stated that at his site they also incorporate an after school study hall as an alternate consequence to campus intervention. All three administrators identified counseling as a main intervention of the implementation process of PBIS.

One participant said administrators supported teachers with the implementation of PBIS by being present on the campus grounds and quick to respond to student matters. Another administrator expressed that teachers are

supported by implementing student reward programs to support positive changes in behavior and to recognize good choices. Two administrators stated they supported and fostered teacher advocacy on campus encouraging them to be leaders in the PBIS initiative.

### **What Are the Benefits of PBIS in a High School Environment? (R2)**

Two of the three administrators noted that the school climate had changed due to teachers that implemented PBIS with fidelity. Two administrators also reported fewer fights on campus and less student suspensions due to the implementation of restorative practices. All three administrators agreed that an overall positive change has transpired since PBIS. Counseling is used more often to support a more positive climate. All administrators stated that less major offenses occur due to this approach.

All three administrators responded with a yes when asked if they noticed changes in classroom behavior as a result of PBIS. Two administrators reported minor issues still being present while major issues have decreased. All three of the administrators said they have noticed a change in the response to student behavior. They stated teaching strategies that address behavior have been incorporated since PBIS.

When all three administrators were asked if they think PBIS can improve academic achievement, each one answered yes. One administrator felt that it improved behavior for certain student populations more than others. Two elaborated by stating more students are staying in class, giving them an opportunity to continue to have access to the curriculum.

**What Are the Limitations of PBIS and How May They Be Addressed? (R3)**

All three administrators shared negative factors associated with PBIS. One of the three administrators stated that teachers are not given enough professional development. Another administrator reported that the district should provide a better method of evaluating the PBIS program and implement a time to review the data often. Rewards were addressed as a negative factor in two different ways. One administrator said teachers did not think students should be rewarded for doing the right thing, while another administrator stated that the rewards implemented were not significant enough to cause students to change their behavior. Another negative factor noted by an interviewee was that teachers may avoid addressing inappropriate behavior due to the documentation required. This interviewee also shared that teachers feel like the consequences of inappropriate behavior are not met with clear cut solutions. Two administrators felt like PBIS was perceived by teachers as another thing to do.

The final question for the three administrators was what advice you would give to schools to make PBIS more effective. One administrator felt that better rewards are needed to incentivize students. A second administrator reported that teachers need more support, such as professional development, and an opportunity to have a chance to hear more success stories. The third administrator thought that restorative practices should be integrated into curriculum and instruction. Two of the three administrators agreed that PBIS should be a teacher driven initiative for better implementation. Finally, two administrators reflected that working with teacher

leaders and staff on common goals would help the PBIS initiative by providing more fidelity to the program.

### **Themes**

#### **What Are the Experiences of High School Administrators Regarding the Transition From Zero Tolerance to the Implementation of PBIS? (R1)**

The first theme that emerged among the three administrators interviewed was that they were met with teacher resistance during the transition from zero tolerance to the implementation of PBIS. Another theme that emerged at each comprehensive high school is the implementation of a PBIS campus intervention and counseling program.

#### **What Are the Benefits of PBIS in a High School Environment? (R2)**

The administrators all agreed that PBIS has changed the climate of their school. They believed less major offenses occurred due to this approach.

Administrators also perceived a positive change in the how teachers responded to students. All administrators agreed that PBIS can improve academic achievement.

#### **What Are the Limitations of PBIS and How May They Be Addressed? (R3)**

One theme that emerged was that teachers perceive PBIS as one more thing to do. Administrators believe this initiative should be teacher driven for the maximum success. When administrators were asked to share advice that they would give to schools to make PBIS more effective, themes emerged, such as offering more professional development and supporting staff to achieve a higher level of fidelity.

### **Implications**

The primary implication of this study is the need to provide a level of basic training for all teachers in order to realize the full potential of PBIS. Secondly, staff should have additional dedicated time throughout the year to analyze PBIS data for the purpose of making program connections and improvements.

### **Recommendations**

1. Conduct a similar study focusing on new teachers that have completed PBIS training.
2. Conduct a similar study with classified staff who directly work with students.
3. Conduct a similar study with eleventh and twelfth grade high school students.
4. Conduct a similar study with stakeholders such as parents and support staff to gain insight on all aspects of the PBIS initiative.

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## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  
INTERVIEW QUESTION MATRIX

| Interview Questions   | R1 | R2 | R3 |
|---|----|----|----|
| <b>R1. What are the experiences of high school administrators regarding the transition from zero tolerance to the implementation of PBIS?</b> |    |    |    |
| 1. Share your experiences during the transition from zero tolerance to the implementation of PBIS.  | X  |    |    |
| 2. Share changes in student discipline policies since the implementation of PBIS.   | X  |    |    |
| 3. Identify and describe the interventions that were implemented as per PBIS.   | X  |    |    |
| 4. Describe how administrators have supported teachers with the implementation of PBIS.   | X  |    |    |
| <b>R2. What are the benefits of PBIS in a high school environment?</b>  |    |    |    |
| 5. Has PBIS changed the climate of your school? Please elaborate.   |    | X  |    |
| 6. Have you noticed changes in classroom behavior as a result of PBIS? Please explain.  |    | X  |    |
| 7. Do you believe that PBIS can improve academic achievement? Please elaborate.   |    | X  |    |
| <b>R3. What are the limitations of PBIS and how may they be addressed?</b>  |    |    |    |
| 8. Are there negative factors associated with PBIS? Please elaborate.   |    |    | X  |
| 9. What advice would you give to schools to make PBIS more effective?   |    |    | X  |

APPENDIX B  
INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

California State University, Stanislaus  
Lisa Chaves, [lchaves@lodiUSD.net](mailto:lchaves@lodiUSD.net)

**Secondary Administrators' Perceptions and Opinions Regarding the  
Implementation of PBIS**

**Purpose of the Research**

The Principal Investigator, Lisa Chaves, is a graduate student at California State University, Stanislaus conducting research for a master's degree in education/school administration.

The purpose of this research is to determine the perceptions and opinions of high school administrators regarding the implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).

**Procedures**

Your participation will require approximately 35 minutes and is completed online at your computer.

If you decide to volunteer to participate in this research, the following will occur:

- You will be asked to review interview questions, provided to you through an email attachment, prior to the interview session.
- You will review and return a consent form prior to the interview.
- You will be asked about your perspectives and opinions regarding PBIS at your school.
- This interview will take place through internet based video chat (Zoom), approximately for 35 minutes.
- This interviewer will take notes and audio/video record your responses through Zoom to ensure accuracy.
- Total time commitment will be approximately 35 minutes.

### **Potential Risks or Discomforts**

There are no potential risks to you for your participation in this study.

### **Potential Benefits of the Research**

There are no direct benefits to you for this study, though your responses may benefit administrators, teachers, and district officials who are involved in making decisions regarding the implementation of PBIS.

### **Confidentiality**

The information collected by this researcher will be protected from all inappropriate disclosure under the law. All information, including question responses, and audio recordings of the interview, will be kept in a secure location on a password protected computer. Only this researcher, and her faculty sponsor, will have access to the data. Any hard copy documents such as consent forms, printouts, or documents that contain personal identifying information (PII) will be stored securely in a locked file cabinet when not in use and handled only by this researcher.

This researcher will not keep your research data to use for future research or other purposes.

### **Costs**

There is no cost to you beyond the time and effort required to complete the procedure listed above.

### **Compensation**

There will be no compensation for participating in this research.

### **Participation and Withdrawal**

Your participation is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or stop participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits.

### **Questions**

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact me, **Lisa Chaves** at **(209) 747-1803** or my faculty sponsor, **Dr. John Borba** at **(209) 667-3260**.

If you have any questions regarding your rights and participation as a research subject, please contact the IRB Administrator by phone (209) 667-3493 or email [IRBadmin@csustan.edu](mailto:IRBadmin@csustan.edu).

### **Consent**

Please mark an x in the boxes below, as a yes to indicate that you are 18 years of age or older, and consent to have the interview audio/video recorded. Please feel free to print a copy of this consent page to keep for your records. Once the consent form is complete, please return it via email to the researcher at [lchaves@lodi.usd.net](mailto:lchaves@lodi.usd.net).

Below, please mark an x in the box to indicate a yes to the following statements:

**Name of Participant:** \_\_\_\_\_

Agrees that participant is 18 years of age or older.

Agrees to participate and have the interview audio/video recorded.